

Evaluation of the NC S.A.F.E. Media Campaign

Final Report

Prepared for:

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List of Acronyms

ATF	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives
BRFSS	Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System
DJJDP	Division of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
NC	North Carolina
NC DPS	NC Department of Public Safety
NC S.A.F.E.	NC Secure All Firearms Effectively

Glossary

Ad-Related Belief: A belief or perception shaped by exposure to a specific ad. These can include what people think about an issue (e.g., safe storage), the credibility of the messenger, or how relevant the ad feels.

Audience-Channel-Message-Evaluation (ACME) framework: A framework to plan and assess a media campaign by aligning four parts: Audience (who you want to reach), Channel (where you will reach them, such as TV, radio, or social media), Message (what you want to say), and Evaluation (how you will measure success).

Literature Review: A summary of what is already known from prior studies, reports, and credible sources. It helps the team understand effective strategies, avoid repeating past mistakes, and identify gaps the campaign can address.

Outcome Evaluation: An assessment of how knowledge, attitudes and beliefs shifted because of the campaign.

Process Evaluation: A method to understand how a campaign was carried out. It tracks what was implemented, how much was delivered (reach and frequency), who was exposed, and whether activities happened as planned.

Social Cognitive Theory: A framework for understanding behavior that emphasizes learning from others and the environment. It posits that people are more likely to adopt a behavior when they see it modeled, believe they can do it (self-efficacy), expect positive outcomes, and receive reinforcement.

Social Media Listening: A process for monitoring and analyzing public conversations on platforms like X, Facebook, and Instagram, to understand how frequently the campaign is discussed on social media.

Theory of Reasoned Action: A framework that explains how behavior is driven mainly by people's intentions. Intentions are shaped by attitudes (how someone feels about the behavior) and subjective norms (what they believe important others expect them to do).

Executive Summary

Background

The NC S.A.F.E. Media Campaign, launched in June 2023 by the North Carolina Department of Public Safety's Division of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention (DJJDP), aims to promote safe firearm storage practices to reduce unauthorized access, firearm theft, and injuries, particularly among children. Developed under the leadership of then-Governor Roy Cooper, the campaign seeks to reduce unsafe firearm storage and foster safer storage behaviors through a strategic communication and education campaign. RTI International conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the campaign to assess its implementation and outcomes, as well as to provide evidence-based recommendations for future initiatives.

Methods

The evaluation employed a multi-faceted approach, including:

- **Literature Review:** Examined firearm safety attitudes, storage practices, and prior campaign evaluations.
- **Process Evaluation:** Assessed campaign implementation, including campaign delivery, such as reach, frequency, and impressions of media. Conducted interviews with firearm owners in North Carolina to assess the audience's receptivity and comprehension of campaign messages.
- **Social Media Listening:** Analyzed organic engagement across platforms Facebook, Instagram, and X.
- **Outcome Evaluation:** Conducted 2 waves of surveys with firearm-owning adults in North Carolina to measure campaign awareness, beliefs, and behaviors.

The evaluation framework utilized the Audience-Channel-Message-Evaluation (ACME) model and the Theory of Reasoned Action to explore how campaign exposure influenced knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. Data collection and analysis methods included online surveys, demographic weighting, and regression analyses to identify trends and correlations.

Key Findings

Campaign Awareness and Engagement

- **Awareness:** 58.8% of participants reported awareness of at least one campaign ad. 79.9% of participants who recalled seeing the NC S.A.F.E. brand also reported recalling NC S.A.F.E. messaging.
- **Engagement:** Social media platforms, particularly Facebook and Instagram, were critical in driving impressions and interactions. Earned media mentions totaled 954, with significant contributions from law enforcement and public health organizations.

- **Ad Effectiveness:** Ads such as "Don't Become Their Next Target" were highly motivating, while others like "An Unlocked Gun Is a Tragedy Waiting to Happen" received mixed feedback due to design and emotional impact.

Behavioral Insights

- **Safe Storage Practices:** Only 16% of participants adhered to all recommended practices (locking firearms, storing them unloaded, and securing ammunition separately). Barriers included cost, quick access needs, and lack of children in the home.
- **Beliefs and Motivations:** Participants exposed to campaign ads were more likely to agree with statements like "Locking up my gun can reduce the risk of suicide." However, misconceptions about "unlocked" storage being safe persisted.
- **Demographic Trends:** Older participants, females, and urban residents were more likely to practice safe storage, while rural and lower-income individuals were less likely to report practicing safe storage.

Feedback on Campaign Materials

- **Positive Reactions:** Participants appreciated the focus on family safety and the emotional appeal of ads featuring children.
- **Critiques:** Some ads were perceived as judgmental or unclear. Suggestions included adding statistics, emphasizing cost-effective storage options, and tailoring messages to diverse audiences.
- **Suggested Design Improvements:** Recommendations included softer color tones, more noticeable call-to-action buttons, and the inclusion of QR codes for easier access to resources.

Recommendations

Expand Outreach:

- Increase funding for ad placements in rural and underserved areas.
- Partner with gun shops, shooting ranges, and community organizations to enhance visibility.
- Diversify media channels, including billboards and in-person events.

Enhance Messaging:

- Address misconceptions about safe storage, particularly in vehicles.
- Focus on motivators like family safety while addressing barriers such as cost and quick access needs.

- Incorporate personal testimonials from relatable gun owners to resonate with diverse audiences.

Incorporate Audience Feedback into Future Campaign Materials:

- Use clear, actionable messaging with detailed demonstrations of safe storage practices.
- Include statistics and data to emphasize the risks of unsecured firearms.
- Refine ad designs to increase emotional impact and relatability.

Strengthen Future Evaluation:

- Collect baseline data during the planning phase to refine messaging and allow for measurable differences in storage behaviors.
- Conduct continued evaluation to measure long-term behavioral changes and campaign effectiveness.

Implications for Future Funding and Evaluation

The NC S.A.F.E. campaign demonstrates the potential of state-level initiatives to promote firearm safety and reduce risks associated with unsecured firearms. While the campaign effectively increased awareness and influenced beliefs and intentions, further communication efforts are needed to address persistent misconceptions and barriers to safe storage. Further, additional funding and time on the air is needed for the campaign to influence measurable safe storage behaviors. By integrating evidence-based strategies, targeted messaging, and community partnerships, the NC Department of Public Safety can enhance public safety and reduce firearm-related injuries across North Carolina.

Introduction

In 2024, an estimated 41.2% of adults residing in North Carolina had a firearm in or around their home. Of these, 44.8% had firearms both loaded and unlocked in or around the home (NC State Center for Health Statistics, 2025), increasing the risk for accidental harm to children. In 2021, 118 North Carolina children between zero and 17 years of age died due to a firearm injury, surpassing the number of North Carolina children killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes (NC Division of Public Health, 2024). Research notes that a properly secured firearm can reduce the risk of unintentional injuries or suicide by youth in a household by nearly one-third (Monuteaux et al., 2019), underscoring the need to promote safe firearm storage.

Unsecured firearms are also at risk for theft. Between 2019 and 2023, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) estimated that an average of 10,876 firearms were stolen in North Carolina each year from private citizens (ATF, 2025). These firearms are often subsequently used to commit crimes.

Responding to the growing numbers of firearm-related child deaths and firearm thefts across North Carolina, then-governor of North Carolina Roy Cooper launched the North Carolina Secure All Firearms Effectively (“NC S.A.F.E.”) public education media campaign to promote safe firearm storage in both homes and cars in June 2023 (Office of the Governor, 2023).

The goals of NC S.A.F.E. are to:

1. Reduce the number of households in North Carolina that store their firearms unsafely (i.e., loaded and unlocked) by at least 10%.
2. Reduce unauthorized access to firearms in the home and in cars.
3. Reduce the theft of firearms.
4. Reduce the incidence of firearm-related injuries, especially among children.

NC S.A.F.E. uses a variety of methods to meet its goals, including airing paid ads and public service announcements (PSAs) on television and radio and distributing gun locks at events such as the North Carolina State Fair.

The NC Department of Public Safety’s (DPS) Division of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (DJJDP) commissioned RTI International in August 2024 through December 2025 to conduct an evaluation of NC S.A.F.E. The objectives of this evaluation of NC S.A.F.E. are to:

- Assess implementation of the campaign.
- Assess effectiveness of the campaign in achieving its intended outcomes by examining campaign exposure and awareness with key psychosocial predictors of safe gun storage beliefs, behavioral intentions, and behavior.

Our evaluation involved four main activities:

- a **literature review** to help inform all evaluation activities;

- a **process evaluation** to understand campaign delivery, such as reach, frequency, and impressions of media, as well as one-on-one interviews with gun owners in North Carolina to help us understand the audience’s receptivity and comprehension of campaign messages;
- **social media listening** to track and analyze public conversations (e.g., earned media) about NC S.A.F.E. across social media platforms; and
- an **outcome evaluation** that used two waves of an online longitudinal survey to assess whether key outcomes, such as firearm safety knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, can be attributed to exposure to the campaign.

Our approach to evaluating the NC S.A.F.E. campaign is based on the Audience-Channel-Message-Evaluation (ACME) framework for health communication campaigns (Noar, 2012) that organizes principles of health communication media campaign design, implementation, and evaluation. **Figure 1** depicts our logic model for informing the NC S.A.F.E. evaluation, based on the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

According to this model, campaign advertising first impacts ad exposure, which then affects ad-related attention and processing outcomes. Next, these variables influence campaign-targeted psychosocial predictors of behavior and other safe gun storage-related beliefs, perceptions, knowledge, and attitudes. Intentions to store guns safely may be formed and reinforced by attitudinal and normative beliefs about safe gun storage, which then shapes behavior. Given the hypothesized effects, measuring and examining effects of these variables is critical to NC S.A.F.E. evaluation efforts.

Inputs for campaign development (not measured by the evaluation):

- funding for campaign activities
- partnerships with community organizations and law enforcement
- expertise in gun safety and safe storage education
- digital platforms for web advertising
- individual propensity to be exposed to the campaign

Campaign activities and advertising:

- running TV ads promoting safe gun storage
- running web ads targeting households with firearms
- giving out informational materials at local events
- distributing gun locks and gun safes
- conducting training sessions with law enforcement, health care providers, and school personnel (Associated Press, 2023)

Campaign outputs (not measured by the evaluation):

- number of TV and web ads aired
- number of community events attended
- quantity of materials distributed at events
- number of gun locks distributed

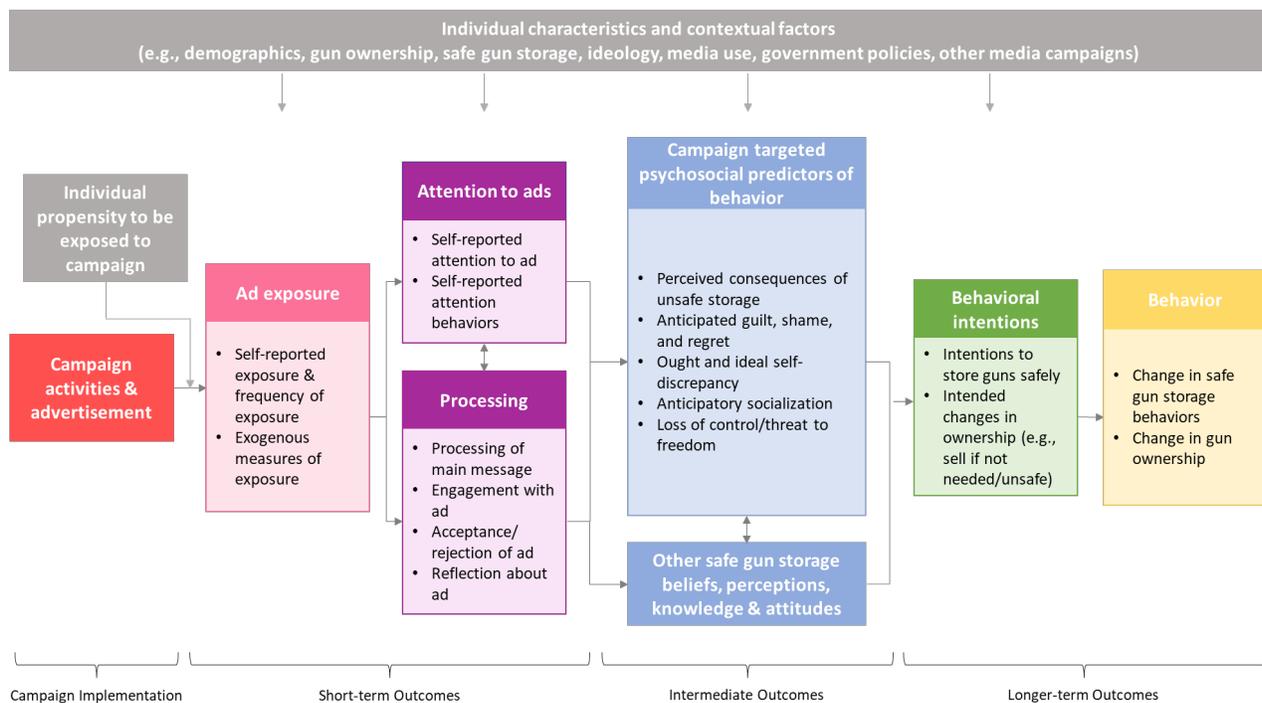
Campaign outcomes:

- **Short-term:** Increased awareness of NC S.A.F.E. and safe gun storage practices.
- **Intermediate:** Changes in perceived consequences of unsafe storage and in knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about safe gun storage.
- **Long-term:** Changes in intentions to store guns safely and in safe gun storage behavior.

Campaign impacts (not measured by the evaluation):

- enhanced community safety
- lower rates of youth gun violence and unauthorized firearm use

Figure 1. Logic model of mass media campaign evaluations



Literature Review

The evaluation team conducted a literature review to inform the development of our study instruments and to confirm that we were aware of and reasonably consistent with prior studies of firearm safe storage campaigns. We conducted a review of academic and grey literature, focusing on materials from the past 15 years, although some highly cited articles from before that time have also been included. The details of each study are summarized below.

How are “locked and unloaded” defined and measured?

Broadly, firearm storage practices can be sorted into four categories across the axes of locking practices and loading practices, which define the spectrum of firearm safe storage:

	Unlocked	Locked
Loaded	Least safe	Moderately safe
Unloaded	Moderately safe	Most safe

This categorization is complicated by the fact that people may own multiple guns that may be stored differently. Additionally, locked and loaded may be considered slightly safer than unlocked and unloaded depending on access to ammunition. However, we did not assess this difference in our review of the literature. Some studies in our review asked about each of the four categories above for each gun, while others combined or reduced the “moderately safe” categories and asked whether “any firearm” fell into each category, as in the 2021–2022 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS):

1. “Are any firearms kept in or around your home?”
2. “Are any of these firearms now loaded?”
3. “Are any of these loaded firearms also unlocked? By unlocked, we mean you do not need a key or combination or a hand/fingerprint to get the gun or to fire it. We don’t count a safety as a lock.”

Notably, guns that are unloaded and unlocked are not captured by BRFSS, but the BRFSS questions do introduce “time” as a component of the measure (“Are any of these firearms *now* loaded?”). Most studies do not include or acknowledge that gun storage practices may change over time and ask about storage in the general sense, although at least one study that we reviewed asked about the use of locks on the reference date and usual use (Grossman et al., 2005). Similar to the BRFSS, many studies are at the household level or ask about individual- and household-level access.

Questions about locking and storage are often operationalized into hierarchical, mutually exclusive categories, as in a national survey conducted in 2015 (Azrael et al., 2018). Note: These categories do not include an “unsure” option, though this is a category that may be particularly relevant and has been included in some surveys (Jennissen et al., 2021):

1. Those who stored at least one gun loaded and unlocked (the least safe storage method).
2. Those who stored no guns loaded and unlocked but at least one gun loaded and locked or unloaded and unlocked (the intermediate-risk category).
3. Those who stored all guns unloaded and locked (the safest storage method).

Depending on the focus of the study, some of the literature we reviewed asked high-level questions (e.g., BRFSS; Azrael et al., 2018), while other studies have explored different definitions of locking and loading, as described below.

Locking

There are many ways that a gun can be “locked.” The studies that we reviewed collected data on the following devices and mechanisms. Because terminology and respondent knowledge may differ, surveys sometimes provide definitions and images of these options to improve the accuracy of responses. Mechanisms are much less frequently assessed.

Locking Devices	Locking Mechanisms
Gun safe	Key/personal Identification Number/dial
Gun cabinet	Biometric
Gun rack	
Trigger lock	
Cable lock	
Hard case (e.g. Pelican case)	
Gun case	
Lock box	
Locked closet, drawer, room	
In-vehicle lock	
Clamshell	
Wireless gun safe monitor	
Other	

At least one national survey also collected data on whether the gun was hidden in addition to being locked (Anestis et al., 2023), while a systematic review of storage campaign effectiveness measured whether the gun was removed from the home as a result of receiving education on the risks posed by firearm access (McGee et al., 2003). A separate national survey collected information on gun storage location: in my vehicle, in my house, in a building separate from my house (e.g., garage), on my person, other (Crifasi et al., 2018). This survey collected data on whether the gun was stored disassembled, which is another safety measure. The measures for the Crifasi survey were different from those of other studies, but they were informed by four

2015 focus groups conducted with Texas gun owners and may more accurately reflect storage practices in actual use (at that time and place).

Loaded

A “loaded” gun has been defined as “one bullet in the chamber, cylinder, or an inserted magazine” (Carter et al., 2022) but studies typically only ask whether a gun is loaded without providing a definition. One survey did distinguish between “loaded but unchambered” versus “loaded and chambered” (Crifasi et al, 2018). “Loading” is adding ammunition to a firearm’s magazine, and “chambering” is loading ammunition from the magazine into the chamber.

Ammunition

The American Academy of Pediatrics and Everytown for Gun Safety advocate for guns to be stored locked and unloaded, with ammunition stored separately. Crifasi and colleagues (2018) measured how ammunition was stored: locked gun safe or other locked location; unlocked location, but physically separate from guns; or unlocked location, same physical location as guns. In at least one study, ammunition was assessed in the measure of perception (“Guns should be stored locked and unloaded with the ammunition stored separately when they are not in use”) but not in the measure of storage behavior (Simonetti et al., 2018). Of the academic studies of firearm safe storage campaigns evaluated, 20% included ammunition in the definition of safe storage.

What are commonly measured predictors of safe storage?

Below we list common measures included in models that predict firearm ownership. In these models, age, purpose of ownership (e.g., for protection), number of guns owned, and whether there are children in the home are often the strongest predictors of self-reported safe storage practices.

Category	Measures
Demographics	Race/ethnicity, sex, age, education, income, children in household, region, rurality, political ideology, veteran status (including era served), marital status
Gun-related	Types, number, reason for storage choices (e.g., to “prevent theft,” “prevent unauthorized access by an adult household member,” “prevent access by an adolescent/teenager,” “prevent access by a child (younger than adolescent/teenager),” “keep firearm in good condition,” and “other”; Anestis et al., 2023), purpose of ownership (e.g., protection against strangers, protection against people I know, protection against animals, protection against unspecified agents, hunting, other sporting use, a collection, work, or for some other reason; Mauri et al., 2019; also see Carter et al., 2022), reasons for not owning (see Carter et al., 2022), carrying practices (generally assessed in terms of whether they carried a loaded gun at all over the past 30 days), conceal carry permitting, history of growing up in a home with a firearm, whether they received firearm safety training, exposure to firearm violence, history of health care screening for access

Category	Measures
Beliefs	<p>Anestis et al., 2018: Is owning a gun associated with suicide risk?; Is gun storage associated with suicide risk? (4-item Likert scale)</p>
	<p>Karras et al., 2019: To what extent did they feel members of their own (self-defined) community were at risk for suicide and firearm injury (“awareness”)? How effective were safe storage practices (i.e., unloaded; unlocked); at reducing risk for serious injury or death (“efficacy beliefs”)? Agreement with statements of “normative beliefs” for safe firearm storage in the home (e.g., most veterans safely store firearms in their homes). (5-item Likert scale)</p>
	<p>Mauri et al., 2019: Do you think having a gun in the house makes it a safer place to be or a more dangerous place to be? (safer, more dangerous, it depends, or refused)</p>
	<p>Salhi et al., 2021: Do you think having a gun in the house makes it a safer place to be or a more dangerous place to be? (safer/more dangerous). This question was followed, depending on the respondent’s answer, by: “Are there circumstances in which you could imagine having a firearm might make the house more dangerous/might make it safer?” If respondents replied “Yes,” their response was categorized as “It depends” resulting in three response categories: “Yes”/”No”/”It depends.”</p>
	<p>Simonetti et al., 2018: Guns should be stored locked and unloaded with the ammunition stored separately when they are not in use; Do you think having a gun in the house makes it a safer place to be or a more dangerous place to be? Having a gun in the home increases the risk of suicide. (5-item Likert scale)</p>
Attitudes/ Opinions	<p>Anestis et al., 2018: Are you open to the idea of storing a gun more safely in the future to prevent a suicide attempt by yourself? Are you open to the idea of storing a gun more safely in the future to prevent a suicide attempt by a loved one or someone else that lives with you? (4-item Likert scale)</p>
	<p>Karras et al., 2019: Agreement with “attitudes toward safe storage practices for suicide prevention” (e.g., safe firearm storage can decrease suicide risk). (5-item Likert scale)</p>
	<p>Salhi et al., 2021: Having a gun in the home increases the risk of suicide. If a gun owner has to take the time to unlock or load their gun, it’s no good for protection. Guns should be stored locked and unloaded with the ammunition stored separately. (5-item Likert scale)</p>

Category

Measures

Simonetti et al., 2018:

If a gun owner has to take the time to unlock or load their gun, it's no good for self-protection. (5-item Likert scale)

Butterworth et al., 2019:

Assessed willingness to (1) store a firearm more securely to prevent their own suicide attempt or an attempt by a loved one and (2) to let a trusted individual temporarily store a firearm if the participant or a loved one became highly distressed.

Politics

Although people who practice conservative politics are more likely to own guns, there is no strong evidence that firearm storage is associated with politics after adjusting for other factors (Berrigan et al., 2019). Butterworth (2019) explored this further, asking participants to describe their political views using liberal, conservative, and moderate descriptors in the domains of fiscal and social policy. Definitions of these terms were not provided to participants. This item was scored from zero (fiscally conservative/socially conservative) to 6 (fiscally liberal/socially liberal). This study found that social policy views were associated with openness to store safely for safety of others, not oneself. Notably, the framing of political ideology has shifted significantly over the past decade so this may be an evolving predictor.

What are the characteristics of the safe storage campaigns identified and what evidence of effectiveness or efficacy have they generated?

Effectiveness research

There has been limited outcomes research conducted on campaign effectiveness. The most rigorous study of a multimedia, general population campaign that we identified is very dated but highly cited. This study evaluated a 1997 campaign using television and radio announcements, educational materials, billboards, and discount coupons for lock boxes in King County, Washington (Sidman et al., 2005). Researchers used a quasi-experimental design and compared the intervention site with nine control counties from out of state. The researchers conducted cross-sectional surveys assessing the storage behaviors of handgun-owning households with children pre- and post-intervention (through 2001). Storage improved similarly across intervention and control sites over the study period.

We identified two more recent national campaign efforts that have not been as rigorously evaluated on outcome measures, and may have a much larger budget than NC S.A.F.E. The Ad Council's *End Family Fire* program is a multimedia campaign and immersive digital experience that shares real-life stories. These are captured in a book that doubles as a gun safe. According to internal data from an Ipsos online survey, the Ad Council reported that storage practices are more likely to change among people who are aware of the campaign, than people who see the

campaign are more likely to seek information on safe storage, and that these people are also more likely to discuss the topic with friends and family. These results were not peer reviewed.

In addition, the RAND Corporation conducted a process evaluation of *Project ChildSafe* (PCS), a safe storage campaign funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance through the team of National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF)/APCO Worldwide (we reviewed the 2019 final report). PCS involved distributing firearm locks and conducting safety education activities under its Firearm Locks Distribution and Safe Storage Program (FLD/SSP). At the local level, the campaign included public service announcements and other media promotion (e.g., print ads, social media), website materials, and established partnerships. The central element of the campaign was to develop local partnerships, enable these partners to create other local partnerships, and disseminate gun safety information in conjunction with cable-style gun locks. RAND provided campaign site summaries, which allow for a cross-site comparison across the domains of community need; launch/implementation; partner involvement; partnerships; and successes and challenges.

In Texas, the *Keep 'Em Safe* media campaign and evaluation is ongoing. In September 2023, Texas enacted a policy that mandated all school districts in the state provide communication to parents on safe firearms storage practices. This campaign is a partnership between the Texas Department of Public Safety's *Keep 'Em Safe Texas* campaign and the Texas School Safety Center (TxSSC) (Fronius, 2025). The campaign's focus is to promote responsible firearm storage and keep firearms from falling into unauthorized hands. It uses digital billboards in more than 70 Texas cities to spread these messages (Martins, 2024). WestED and TxSSC are using a stratified random sampling strategy to survey school administrators across Texas, representing diverse geographic regions, school sizes, and urban/rural locations, and parents within the school communities on firearm ownership, storage practices, and perceptions of the campaign (Fronius, 2025).

Other safe storage campaign studies that we identified were in specific populations and not media-based. For example, we identified one study of a pamphlet campaign evaluation targeting patients being discharged from a general pediatric surgical service (Hoops et al., 2021). The study reported on a single post-campaign survey that assessed the quality of the pamphlet and respondents' intentions to improve firearm storage (58%). We also identified a study of a suicide prevention campaign that sent mailings to educate firearm retailers about suicide prevention and provided materials for them to put on display; on follow up, 48% had done so (Vriniotis et al., 2015).

Efficacy research

There has been a more rigorous body of research conducted on safe storage messaging efficacy. One study randomized veteran participants into three conditions, exposing them once per week for a total of 3 weeks to either (a) a firearm safety message only; (b) firearm safety and mental health promotion messages; or (c) a mental health promotion message only (control group) (Karras et al., 2019). Each message was less than 2 minutes long and pre-post analyses indicated no significant changes, though group A (firearm safety message only) was slightly

more likely to agree with the concept that secure storage is important during emotional or stressful times. Anestis and colleagues used a randomized controlled trial design of in-person lethal means counseling among service members and also included a group that received cable locks (Anestis, et al. 2021a). At-follow up, this group was more likely to report safe storage. This research group has also performed a series of studies on campaign messengers (Anestis et al., 2021b, 2022). Across populations, this research has found that the messenger can be more important than the message, and that law enforcement, current military personnel, and military veterans are the three most credible sources to discuss firearm safety.

Methods and Analytic Approach

The following section describes our methods and analytic approach for evaluating NC S.A.F.E. These activities included:

- A **process evaluation** to understand campaign delivery, such as reach, frequency, and impressions of media. Additionally, using one-on-one interviews with gun owners in North Carolina, we sought to understand the audience's receptivity and comprehension of campaign messages.
- **Social media listening** to measure engagement with the NC S.A.F.E. campaign on social media, such as the use of keywords or hashtags.
- An **outcome evaluation** that used two waves of an online longitudinal survey to assess whether key outcomes, such as firearm safety knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, can be attributed to exposure to the campaign.

Process Evaluation

Interview Objectives

We conducted two rounds of interviews in April and August/September 2025 with firearm owners in North Carolina to explore beliefs and behaviors around safe firearm storage and obtain feedback on NC S.A.F.E. advertisements. Results of the interviews can be used in combination with the findings from the other study activities to plan for future NC S.A.F.E. campaigns.

Eligibility and Recruitment

In collaboration with DPS, we created a telephone screener to define eligibility criteria (see Appendix 1). To be eligible for the study, participants had to be 18 years of age or older, reside in North Carolina, and report keeping at least one firearm on their property. We set soft quotas for having children under the age of 18 living in the home and demographic characteristics such as age, education, and race/ethnicity to ensure diversity of the sample so that findings may be generalized to the population of NC as a whole. Participants were ineligible if they reported working for the North Carolina Department of Public Safety, a market research firm, an advertising agency, or RTI International and/or had participated in an interview or focus group on firearm safety during the past 3 months.

Participants were recruited through a professional research firm's (L&E Research) consumer panel. L&E posted an announcement about the study on its panel message board. Interested individuals had the opportunity to complete a short online screener (see Appendix 2). L&E then contacted individuals who appeared to qualify for further screening and scheduling. Once scheduled, L&E sent participants a confirmation email that included information about the study, the date and time of their interview, and a Zoom link (see Appendix 3). The study consent form

was included as an attachment (see Appendix 4). A reminder email was sent to participants a couple of days before their scheduled interviews (see Appendix 3).

Interview Guide Development

We developed a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendices 5 & 6) for each round based on the study objectives. The guides included sections on firearm ownership, safe storage methods, campaign materials (video and static), and suggestions for ad placement. We made minor changes to the questions in the safe storage methods section in Round 2 based on findings from the first round, but otherwise the guides were the same.

Data Collection

We conducted a total of 30 interviews (15 per round) with participants who met the eligibility criteria described above. Our sample size was chosen based on the number of interviews we expected were needed to reach saturation (Hennink and Kaiser, 2022). The interviews were conducted virtually using Zoom and lasted about 60 minutes. The sessions were recorded and transcribed. After completing the interview, participants received a \$75 token of appreciation from L&E, which could be used to purchase gift cards and other rewards from L&E's incentive platform.

Analysis

Given the rapid turnaround required for analysis and reporting, we conducted a thematic analysis to identify trends and consistencies in participants' responses using a matrix approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Miles & Huberman, 1994). A notetaker recorded comments in real time directly into a notes matrix (i.e., in an Excel file) that segments responses by topic. In the matrix, questions form the columns and each row represents a participant. The analysis team used these data to identify regularities, patterns, and explanations in the responses participants gave during interviews (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Given the qualitative nature of the testing, we have not provided exact counts. Instead, to provide a sense of magnitude for findings, we used the descriptors outlined in **Table 1** for reporting results.

Table 1. Reporting Categories

Reporting Category	By Round (Video and Static Ads)	Reporting Category
One participant	1	1
A few participants	2–3	2–4
Some participants	4–6	5–13
About half of the participants	7–8	14–16
Many participants	9–11	17–23
Most participants	12–14	24–29
All participants	15	30

Social Media Listening

Social Media Listening Objectives

We conducted a social media listening analysis of public posts across Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) to assess how the NC S.A.F.E. campaign was discussed and shared online through earned media. This included identifying who was posting about the campaign, measuring reach and engagement of these posts, and analyzing key themes in conversations. Earned social media content is often generated as a downstream result of paid media exposure and is not fully controlled by campaign organizers. However, strategic efforts - such as encouraging partner organizations to share campaign content - can help catalyze earned media. The objective of this analysis was to understand the impact of earned social media, evaluate partner and stakeholder amplification, and identify opportunities to increase organic engagement among the broader audience in future outreach strategies.

Data Sources and Search Terms

To evaluate campaign reach and engagement, we used two complementary tools: Brandwatch and Meta’s Content Library.

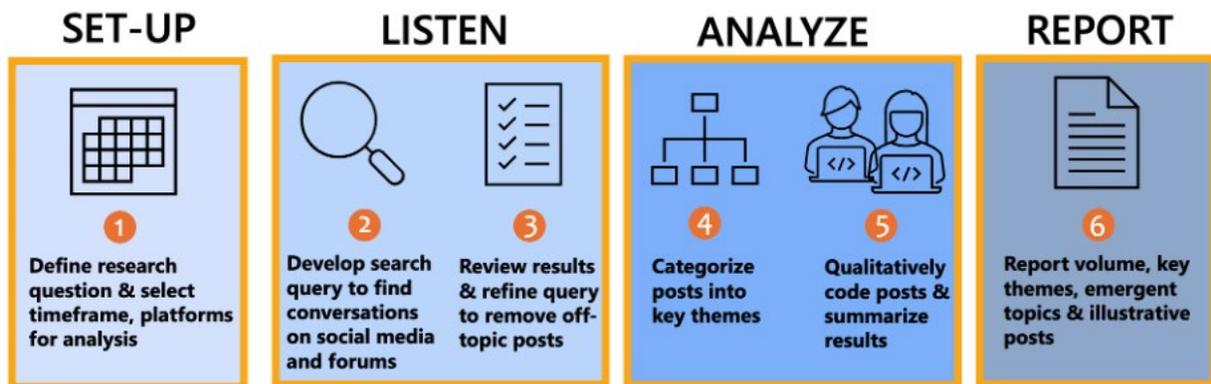
- **Brandwatch** connects directly to multiple social media networks’ application programming interfaces (APIs), which allowed us to extract public posts on X (formerly Twitter).
- **Meta’s Content Library**, a database of page posts from Facebook and Instagram that is available to approved researchers and organizations, enabled us to review organic content shared on Meta platforms.

By combining these systems, we gained a comprehensive view of how audiences talked about and interacted with campaign-related content. After data were pulled from each platform, we reviewed all posts to verify their relevance. Posts determined to be unrelated or off topic were excluded from the dataset to ensure that only content directly referencing the campaign or

related themes was included in the analysis. Figure 2 summarizes the overall social media listening process.

Our analysis focused on two categories of social media activity: organic and earned. Organic content are posts from official campaign accounts. Earned content are posts and shares from the public, media outlets, or partner organizations that referenced the campaign. To ensure relevant posts were included, search terms related to the campaign, such as “NC S.A.F.E.,” “www.ncsafe.org,” and “#keepNCsafe” were applied.

Figure 2. Social Media Listening Process



Social Media Definitions

Table 2 defines key social media metrics used in this analysis (i.e., mentions, impressions, and engagement) and explains how each metric is captured across platforms. Definitions are provided to ensure consistent interpretation of metrics across platforms when assessing campaign reach and engagement.

Table 2. Social Media Metrics

Metric	Facebook and Instagram (Meta Content Library)	X (Brandwatch)
Mentions	The number of posts containing the tracked keyword(s), hashtag(s), or URL(s) used in the search query.	The number of posts or replies containing tracked keyword(s), hashtag(s), or URL(s) used in the search query.
Impressions	The total number of times a post appeared on users' screens, excluding views by the post owner. After 1,000 impressions, counts are rounded to the nearest hundred (e.g., 1,300). Only posts with more than 100 views display an impression count; for analysis purposes, posts with fewer than 100 impressions were rounded up to 100. Impressions are available only for original posts and exclude the reach of shared content, which is not provided by the platform or included in reporting.	The total number of times a post has been viewed, including views that occur from reposts of original content.
Engagement	The total number of user interactions with a post. On Facebook, this includes the sum of all reactions, comments, and shares. On Instagram, this includes the sum of likes and comments, as share counts are not publicly available.	The total number of user interactions with a post. On X, this includes the sum of likes, replies, and reposts.

To better understand who was engaging with the campaign online, we categorized all accounts that posted about the campaign on Facebook, Instagram, and X based on organization type. We developed categories inductively by reviewing the types of accounts identified across platforms and then refined the categories to reflect meaningful distinctions in the data. We defined each category prior to coding to ensure consistency. A list of all categories and their definitions can be found in Table 3. We then systematically coded accounts according to these definitions. This process allowed us to assess which types of organizations and individuals were most active in posting or sharing campaign content across social media platforms.

Table 3. Earned Social Media Profile Account Organizational Categories

Account Category	Definition
Advocacy or Nonprofit	Nonprofit organizations, coalitions, and advocacy groups promoting community health, safety, social justice, or family support. <i>Examples: Moms Demand Action – NC, Family Success Alliance, North Carolinians Against Gun Violence Action Fund</i>
Education & Schools	K–12 schools, school districts, student services programs, and educational nonprofits. <i>Examples: ECPPS Student Services, Student Services of Pitt County Schools, Family Academy WCPSS</i>
Government (Non–Public Health)	Government agencies that do not serve as the public health or public safety authority. This includes city/county governments, state administration, non-health departments. <i>Examples: Buncombe County Government, NC Department of Administration, Town of Morrisville</i>
Health Care Organization	Hospitals, medical centers, clinics, pediatric practices, and professional health care associations.

Account Category	Definition
	<i>Examples: Duke Health, Bloom Pediatric Partners PLLC, North Carolina Healthcare Association</i>
Individual or Digital Creator	Named persons, independent digital creators, or influencers posting in their personal capacity rather than on behalf of an official organization. <i>Examples: Fon Dockery, Michael J Hall, Sharon Robinson</i>
Law Enforcement & Public Safety	Police, sheriffs, public safety departments, fire/EMS agencies. <i>Examples: Greenville Police Department, North Carolina Department of Public Safety, Kannapolis Fire and Police</i>
Media & News	News outlets, journalists, and media platforms. <i>Examples: The Charlotte Observer, WRAL TV, The News & Observer</i>
Other Business or Organization	Private businesses, companies, commercial enterprises, or organizations that do not primarily fit into other categories. <i>Examples: Carolina Firearms Training LLC, Shooting Star Motorsports, Afro Tactical LLC</i>
Political Figures or Parties	Elected officials, candidates, commissioners, political parties, or partisan organizations. <i>Examples: Mayor Don D. Hardy, Governor Josh Stein, NC Democratic Party</i>
Public Health	Government-operated public health agencies (county, district, state) and university-based public health centers focused on population health. <i>Examples: NC Department of Health and Human Services, Cabarrus Health Alliance, UNC Injury Prevention Research Center</i>
Religious Group	Faith-based groups, local churches, and community alliances with a religious or community identity. <i>Examples: Longview Baptist Church, North Carolina Council of Churches</i>

Outcome Evaluation

Outcome Evaluation Objectives

RTI conducted an outcome evaluation study based on an overarching campaign logic model built on behavior change theories such as the theory of reasoned action (that describes pathways between attitude and belief change leading to changes in intentions and behavior; Fishbein, 2008) and social cognitive theory (that illustrates the interaction between the environment and a person's outcome expectations, goals, and agency; Bandura, 1998) to assess the scope and effectiveness of the NC S.A.F.E. public education campaign.

The goal of the outcome evaluation was to assess outcomes resulting from the campaign and determine whether changes in key outcomes, such as firearm safety knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, can be attributed to exposure to the campaign. Further, it sought to determine whether behavior change could be attributed to increased exposure over time. The strength of the attribution is determined by the ability of the evaluation approach to rule out alternative explanations and safety exposures for observed changes in key outcomes. Attributing effects to a campaign requires using multiple, complementary methods that build a case demonstrating that exposure to the campaign leads to changes in key outcomes. The evaluation team measured outcomes of interest, carefully assessed potential confounds (e.g., awareness of other ad campaigns), and measured related outcomes that were hypothesized to

be influenced by the campaign (i.e., beliefs and psychosocial constructs not included in campaign messages). Given the limited duration of the evaluation, we included the efficacy study design as an internal, experimental comparison of outcomes of interest among participants who saw the ads first vs. those who answer questions about their attitudes and beliefs first so that we could see if there were any differences in the event that changes in behavior over time were not detected. Additionally, we measured perceived effectiveness of the campaign ads. Previous studies have shown that perceived effectiveness measures are associated with actual ad effectiveness (Davis & Duke, 2018), and when ads are well received, they are associated with subsequent belief and behavior change (Davis et al., 2012). Finally, we used data from the media vendor to measure variation in potential campaign exposure (e.g., market-level delivery). We combined those data with self-reported campaign exposure to media advertising to understand campaign reach.

The evaluation team used the outcome evaluation to answer the following research questions.

- What proportion of the campaign audience is aware of the campaign advertising?
- What are campaign audience reactions to campaign advertising?
- Are firearm safety–related beliefs changing over time among the intended audience in North Carolina?
- Is campaign exposure associated with perceived safe gun storage practices?
- Is campaign exposure associated with changes in intentions to store guns safely?
- Do campaign-related knowledge, beliefs and attitudes correlate with firearm safe storage behaviors?
- Do campaign-related knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes differ as a function of exposure to and recall of the campaign?
- Is campaign exposure associated with changes in safe gun storage behaviors?

Evaluation Design: Longitudinal Efficacy Study with Supplemental Survey

We conducted a longitudinal study by collecting two waves of data during the 16-month period of performance of the evaluation. The campaign used a multichannel approach, reaching the intended audience through TV and digital video, radio, social media, and out-of-home advertising (e.g., bus wraps, billboards). In the survey, we used a forced exposure approach by including the campaign logo, video ads, and static ads to assess each participant’s level of exposure to the ad campaign materials by asking about their frequency of exposure over the past 3 months. To assess ad efficacy, we included an ad experiment within the survey by first randomly splitting the participants into a control group and an efficacy group and having each group answer survey questions relating to the ads and their awareness of them, and questions relating to the campaign outcomes (i.e., ad-related beliefs, safe gun storage knowledge, what safe and secure gun storage means, firearm storage intentions, and firearm storage behavior) in an alternate order. The control group answered the campaign outcome survey questions first

and then saw the ads, whereas the efficacy group saw the ads first and then answered the survey question related to campaign outcomes. This component of our study design allows for the detection of campaign impact and the potential for changing population level beliefs when lower levels of ad reach and recall might limit the ability to detect campaign effects.

Survey Development

To develop the survey instrument, we used the information from the literature review, experience from previous studies that we conducted to evaluate media campaigns, and guidance from our subject matter expert. The RTI project team drafted the survey and solicited input from DJJDP and Reingold (the media vendor), which we incorporated into the final survey instrument.

Data Collection

We recruited participants using advertising on social media platforms (i.e., Facebook, Instagram). The sample includes Wave 1 participants, longitudinal participants who were recruited at Wave 1 and returned for Wave 2, and supplemental participants who were recruited at Wave 2. Recontacting participants allowed for observing changes in outcomes of interest over time. The supplemental data collection at Wave 2 allowed for an increased sample size to expand our ability to analyze outcomes among subgroups of interest. We defined eligible participants as North Carolina residents who were 18 years of age or older and living in a household with a firearm. We collected participant consent at each survey wave (see Appendix 7); participants completed the screening and survey online (see Appendices 8-14). To prevent fraud and ensure high-quality data, we implemented machine learning and data quality cleaning methods. We weighted the data to approximate the adult demographic composition of the North Carolina population who own firearms. Participants received a \$15 electronic gift card for completing each survey. We did not offer an incentive for completing the screener.

Each wave of the survey took approximately 30 minutes to complete on average between Wave 1 and Wave 2. For Wave 1 data collection, we administered the survey in the field from March 6 through April 24, 2025, and reached approximately 1,400 unique survey completes. For Wave 2 data collection, we administered the survey in the field from July 9 through August 28 and reached approximately 470 longitudinal participants and an additional 500 unique survey completes. We considered the participant to be unique if the email address had not been used in a prior survey completion. For both waves, prior to full launch, we conducted a soft launch with about 100 initial participants to ensure that the survey was working as intended.

Weights

Since the survey used a nonprobability sampling method, we applied calibration weights to minimize bias and to ensure that the data align with the demographic characteristics of the North Carolina adult population who own firearms. The BRFSS contains an optional module on firearm safety, which we used to estimate population total to the eligible NC S.A.F.E. population.

The 2024 NC – BRFSS defined the population as participants who indicated they kept any firearms in or around their home.

For Wave 1, we calculated weights using data from the 2024 NC – BRFSS and the 2024 U.S. Census based on key characteristics that included: (1) rurality; (2) sex; (3) age; (4) race/ethnicity; and (5) education. We calculated the weights for the Wave 2 participants from the replenishment sample independently from the follow-up participants and used the same methodology as the Wave 1 weights. For Wave 2 participants who were follow-ups to Wave 1, we used the Wave 1 weights as the base and applied a nonresponse adjustment before calibration. We then combined the weights for the follow-up sample and the replenishment sample in a procedure called compositing.

For analysis, we used two types of calibrated weights and specified participant ID as the primary sampling unit for clustering:

1. **Cross-sectional weights** – These weights take the Wave 1 weights and Wave 2 weights and apply them to their respective waves. This is used when we produce overall estimates or to look at comparisons between waves.
2. **Longitudinal weights** – These weights consist of the follow-up sample weights that were calculated and calibrated for the Wave 1 and Wave 2 repeat participants. These weights are used when analyzing the longitudinal sample.

The longitudinal weights are specifically used in the difference-in-difference (DiD) analyses to minimize sample-specific biases when comparing trends between Wave 1 and Wave 2 repeat participants to assess potential campaign effects over time.

Analysis

We measured demographic and household characteristics by collecting age, sex, race and ethnicity, rurality (defined as Nielsen County Rank 4 or more), household income, education, political beliefs, military status, employment status, marital status, presence of children in the household, frequency of media use, firearm training status, and number and types of guns owned. We created a media use frequency tertile scale by averaging the frequency (1 = several times a day, 2 = about once a day, 3 = 3 to 5 times a week, 4 = 1 to 2 days a week, 5 = every few weeks, 6 = less often, 7 = never) that each participant used cable TV, YouTube, streaming platforms, radio, and music streaming. We generated tertile categories designated as “low,” “medium,” and “high” media use. We also collected information on how participants store their guns, which is coded as “safe” (unloaded, locked, and separate from ammunition) and “semi-safe” (unloaded, locked, but with ammunition).

We measured the NC S.A.F.E. campaign implementation by asking participants about their general awareness of NC S.A.F.E., how frequently they’ve seen the NC S.A.F.E. brand, specifically in the past 3 months, and where they were exposed to it. For comparison purposes, we also asked participants about their exposure to similar campaigns over the past 3 months. We assessed the participants’ feelings and opinions on the NC S.A.F.E. brand (brand equity), by asking their level of agreement of five items related to it: “gives me the information I want,”

“helps me understand how to store guns safely,” “is for people like me,” “if I saw something from NC S.A.F.E., I would check it out,” and “helps remind me to store guns safely.”

We assessed frequency of awareness of NC S.A.F.E. video ads by showing participants five campaign ads and one fake ad, for comparison purposes, in Wave 1. We showed participants six campaign ads in Wave 2, replacing the fake ad with a campaign ad because of space constraints. We also asked about a static collage of ads in each wave. We asked participants about the frequency with which they had seen each ad in the past 3 months and to identify the main message in the ad. We dichotomized ad frequency into two categories, (0) Never and (1) Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very Often. Overall ad awareness equates to those who were aware of at least one ad and had seen it at least rarely.

We measured participants’ reactions to the ads by asking them their level of agreement with six perceived effectiveness (PE) metrics in Wave 1 and eight in Wave 2: This ad is... worth remembering, grabbed my attention, powerful, meaningful to me, convincing, clear, and believable. We added “informative” at Wave 2, which aligned this measure with the traditional perceived effectiveness scale used for perceived effectiveness. However, the scale has not been validated for adults, nor for safe gun storage, so the results are presented individually.

Finally, to understand the participants’ knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, we asked their opinion on 28 total questions (26 each wave, with the last two questions different in each wave) relating to the campaign’s overall messaging using a 5-point level of agreement Likert scale (identified as ad-related beliefs), their knowledge of safe gun storage and regulation, their safe gun storage intentions, current behavior, and their self-efficacy. While we generally wanted to see agreement with campaign-related beliefs increase over time, a few items were worded such that campaign messaging should cause agreement to decrease. For example, “Storing my gun in a safe puts me at greater risk of harm.” For this reason, we look for agreement to move in the “desired direction,” and not simply increase, to show a positive campaign effect.

We produced descriptive statistics of demographic and household characteristics overall; by wave; by efficacy group, sex, age, political ideology, and rurality; and by safe and semi-safe storage behavior metrics overall and by wave. We then generated descriptive statistics of media use, awareness of at least one ad, awareness of each individual ad, brand equity, main message identification, ad reactions, PE, and campaign outcomes (i.e., ad-related beliefs, safe gun storage knowledge, what safe and secure gun storage means, firearm storage intentions, and firearm storage behavior). We included self-efficacy overall, by wave, and by each demographic characteristic and ad awareness (except when reporting awareness of at least one ad, awareness of each individual ad prevalence).

To analyze the difference in campaign awareness between Waves 1 and 2, we ran a chi-square analysis on the differences between overall awareness of NC S.A.F.E. messages, brand awareness, and the two shared ads among those who were only in Wave 1 and those who were only in Wave 2.

We then generated five regression models. The first two sets of models analyzed how the demographic characteristics, firearm storage behaviors, and impressions predicted (1)

campaign awareness and (2) safe gun storage practices when controlling for survey wave and awareness (for the safe gun storage practice model only). To identify which variables formed the best model fit, we ran an unweighted regression model using backward selection procedure (pe alpha < 0.10 for inclusion and pr alpha > 0.15 for exclusion) while using a tuples procedure on the covariates of interest: military status, children in household, employment, marital status, firearm safety training, media use, and where guns are stored. We retained age, sex, race, political ideology, rurality, education, and income as baseline covariates to ensure their inclusion in the model. We selected the model that had the lowest Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and highest adjusted R-squared, and then ran the model as a weighted logistic regression with the selected covariates.

The third regression model tested the relationship between (3) campaign awareness and campaign outcomes, which included ad-related beliefs, safe gun storage knowledge, firearm storage intentions, and firearm storage behaviors. We broke the fourth regression model into two versions to look at the relationship between (4.A.) safe and semi-safe gun storage knowledge and safe gun storage behavior, and (4.B.) safe and semi-safe gun storage knowledge and semi-safe gun storage behavior. Finally, we used a DiD model to analyze how (5) ad-related beliefs changed over time in the treatment group compared to the control by testing how ad awareness, the interaction between wave and efficacy group, and the control variables relate to ad-related beliefs. We used DiD to estimate the causal impact of an intervention (efficacy group) by taking the difference in the outcome (campaign outcomes) for the treatment group (those who saw media before the campaign outcomes) before and after the intervention, and subtracting the difference in the outcome for the control group (those who saw media after the campaign outcomes) over the same time period (survey waves). The interaction between efficacy group and wave isolated the effect of the intervention from other time-varying factors. We limited the DiD analysis to only the longitudinal sample and applied the longitudinal weights. The control variables for the third, fourth and fifth models included efficacy group, wave, age, sex, race/ethnicity, political beliefs, rurality, education, household income, military status, children in households, employment status, marital status, firearm safety training, number of guns owned, and types of guns owned.

Results

Process Evaluation

Participant Characteristics

Table 4 presents the characteristics of the 30 participants from round 1 and round 2 of interviews. These characteristics were derived from responses to the study screener. Age categories among participants varied, with 10 participants between the ages of 35 and 44, eight between the ages of 25 and 34, eight between the ages of 45 and 65, two between the ages of 21 and 24, one between the ages of 18 and 20, and one aged 66 or older. Most participants identified as white (n = 16), followed by those who identified as Black or African American (n = 9), Hispanic/Latino (n = 3), or as belonging to multiple racial/ethnic groups, including Hispanic/Latino, Native American/Alaskan Native, African American, and white (n = 2). Gender identity was evenly split, with 15 participants identifying as male and 15 as female.

Geographic location was nearly evenly distributed across rural, suburban, and urban areas, with 12 participants from suburban areas, 10 from rural areas, and eight from urban areas. Most participants reported having children under the age of 18 in the home, with 10 participants having one child, seven having two, and fewer participants reporting three (n = 4), four (n = 2), or five (n = 1) children. In terms of education, nine participants had a bachelor's degree and seven had an associate degree; eight reported having some college but no degree, while four had a high school diploma and two had a postgraduate degree. Household income varied across the sample: the largest group reported incomes between \$75,000 and \$100,000 (n = 8), followed by those earning between \$50,000 and \$75,000 (n = 6), \$100,000 to \$150,000 (n = 6), \$35,000 to \$50,000 (n = 3), over \$150,000 (n = 3), \$25,000 to \$35,000 (n = 2), and less than \$25,000 (n = 2).

Table 4. Participant Characteristics

Characteristic	Round 1 (N=15 (100%))	Round 2 (N=15 (100%))	Combined (N=30 (100%))
Age			
18–20	0 (0.0%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (3.3%)
21–24	0 (0.0%)	2 (13.3%)	2 (6.7%)
25–34	5 (33.3%)	3 (20.0%)	8 (26.7%)
35–44	6 (40.0%)	4 (26.7%)	10 (33.3%)
45–65	4 (26.7%)	4 (26.7%)	8 (26.7%)
66+	0 (0.0%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (3.3%)

Characteristic	Round 1 (N=15 (100%))	Round 2 (N=15 (100%))	Combined (N=30 (100%))
Race/Ethnicity			
White	8 (53.3%)	8 (53.3%)	16 (53.3%)
Hispanic/Latino	1 (6.7%)	2 (13.3%)	3 (10.0%)
Black/African American	5 (33.3%)	4 (26.7%)	9 (30.0%)
Multiple racial/ethnic groups	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)	2 (6.7%)
Gender Identity			
Female	7 (46.7%)	8 (53.3%)	15 (50.0%)
Male	8 (53.3%)	7 (46.7%)	15 (50.0%)
Geographic Location			
Rural	5 (33.3%)	5 (33.3%)	10 (33.3%)
Suburban	5 (33.3%)	7 (46.7%)	12 (40.0%)
Urban	5 (33.3%)	3 (20.0%)	8 (26.7%)
Children Under 18			
0	1 (6.7%)	5 (33.3%)	6 (20.07%)
1	6 (40.0%)	4 (26.7%)	10 (33.3%)
2	4 (26.7%)	3 (20.0%)	7 (23.3%)
3	2 (13.3%)	2 (13.3%)	4 (13.3%)
4	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)	2 (6.7%)
5	1 (6.7%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.3%)
Education Level			
High school graduate	1 (6.7%)	3 (20.0%)	4 (13.37%)
Some college	4 (26.7%)	4 (26.7%)	8 (26.7%)
Associate degree	4 (26.7%)	3 (20.0%)	7 (23.3%)
Bachelor's degree	5 (33.3%)	4 (26.7%)	9 (30.0%)
Postgraduate degree	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)	2 (6.7%)
Household Income			
Less than \$25k	0 (0.0%)	2 (13.3%)	2 (6.7%)
25–35k	0 (0.0%)	2 (13.3%)	2 (6.7%)
35–50k	2 (13.3%)	1 (6.7%)	3 (10.0%)
50–75k	4 (26.7%)	2 (13.3%)	6 (20.0%)
75–100k	6 (40.0%)	2 (13.3%)	8 (26.7%)
100–150k	2 (13.3%)	4 (26.7%)	6 (20.0%)
150k+	1 (6.7%)	2 (13.3%)	3 (10.0%)

Firearm Ownership

We asked participants a series of questions about firearm ownership to better understand our sample.

- Length of time owning firearm(s) varied from less than 5 years to more than 10 years.
- Most participants reported keeping between 1 and 10 firearms in their home or on their property, with a few reporting owning 10 or more firearms.
- About half of participants stated that they were the sole owner of the firearms in their home or on their property. Some said that one or more of the firearms belonged to their spouse or partner, and a few participants said that one or more of the firearms belonged to their child, parent, or roommate.

Motivators for Firearm Ownership

We asked participants to share their or others in their household's main reasons for owning firearms. Many shared more than one reason for owning a firearm. All participants said that a main reason for owning a firearm was for personal or home protection, self-defense, or to protect and keep their family safe.

I have it for protection. I'd rather have it and not need it than need it and not have it." [Male, 45–65, suburban]

"[I have firearms] for protection and defense. I have a son, and my husband travels a lot for work. I want to make sure I can protect myself and my son if the need arises." [Female, 35–44, rural]

"[When we moved to NC] I thought, okay, I now have kids. We now own a home that's not gated. Anybody can walk up to our front door. And I also realized just having conversations with people that it was very norm. The conversation wasn't taboo [...] it's easy to acquire a gun. So, I felt, I mean, better to have it and not need it than needed and not have it was my thought process." [Female, 25–34, suburban]

About half the participants shared that they or others owned firearms for hunting or other recreational activities like target or clay/skeet shooting. A few participants reported other reasons for owning firearms, including that they collected them, keeping family heirlooms (firearms passed down through their families), or because they had a current or former profession that involved or required proficiency in firearms, such as law enforcement or military.

Safe Storage Knowledge, Attitudes, and Beliefs

Before asking about specific storage methods that participants utilized, we asked them to describe what "safe and secure" firearm storage meant to them. Note: There is a wide range of responses and understanding of what "safe and secure" means in the responses we heard. Below we report the varying definitions.

Many participants shared that safe and secure firearm storage meant that the firearm(s) were locked up in a safe or locked with a key or code. About half were more general in their responses, sharing that it meant that firearms were inaccessible by unauthorized or unintended users. About half also specified that this meant that firearms were inaccessible by children or minors. Some participants stated that safe and secure storage meant that the firearms were not only locked but also hidden or out of sight.

Some participants stated that safe and secure storage meant that the firearms were stored unloaded. Other less commonly reported sentiments mentioned by a few participants included that safe and secure storage meant storing with a gun or trigger lock, storing it with the safety on, or storing the firearm separately from ammunition. A few participants additionally shared that safe and secure storage meant that firearms were stored locked but easily accessible by themselves or another responsible person in their household in case of emergencies. Notably, no participants defined safe and secure storage as firearms being locked, unloaded, and with ammunition stored separately and locked.

We also asked participants how important safe and secure firearm storage was to them. Most participants stated that it was extremely or of the utmost importance. Many participants said that safe storage is important because it prevents children from accessing firearms or prevents firearm-related accidents or injuries in children. Some participants shared that safe and secure storage is important because it prevents unauthorized or intended users from using or stealing firearms.

"[Safe storage] is very important. I have a toddler at home, and he gets into everything, so it would be the end of me, if anything was to ever happen to him because of that. So, it's very important." [Female, 25–34, urban]

"I think [safe storage] is really important because a gun is a deadly weapon, and I think people that use it should know how to use it. I do not believe that it should be anything that's easily accessible to others, including somebody coming into my home that's not welcome. Getting access to that is a dangerous weapon that gets out on the street, but especially kids are curious, kids are going to, especially if they know something [is] there that they shouldn't be touching, they might try to access it." [Male, 35–44, urban]

Safe Storage Behaviors

We asked participants to share details about how they and others in their households stored their firearm(s). Based on their responses, we determined the extent to which participants were practicing three recommended safe storage practices:

- **“Locked”**: Storing firearm(s) locked in a safe, gun box, or cable box all or most of the time.

- **“Unloaded”**: Storing firearm(s) unloaded¹ all or most of the time. We defined “unloaded” as a firearm that does not contain ammunition in its firing chamber, magazine, or cylinder and any removable magazine or cylinder that holds ammunition is removed or empty.
- **“Ammunition in separate, locked location”**: Storing ammunition in a separate and locked location.

For participants who reported owning more than one firearm, we asked about storage practices for each of the firearms in the home. All firearms in the household must have met the criteria to qualify as practicing the storage behavior. For instance, to qualify as storing their firearms “locked,” all firearms in the household must have been stored locked.

Overall, most participants reported keeping their firearm(s) stored in a locked location all or most of the time. About half the participants reported storing their firearm(s) unloaded all or most of the time. Only some participants reported that they stored their ammunition in a separate locked location (**Table 5**). Notably, only five participants (16%) reported practicing all three safe storage methods for all firearms in their household.

Table 5. Interview Participant–Reported Firearm Storage Behaviors

	Locked	Unloaded	Ammunition in Separate, Locked Location	All Three Safe Storage Behaviors
Participants who reported storage behavior	N = 20 (67%)	N = 16 (53%)	N = 11 (37%)	N = 5 (16%)

Storing Firearms in a Locked Location

Of the participants (n = 20) who indicated that they stored their firearms locked all or most of the time, most said they kept their firearm(s) locked in a safe, such as a biometric safe or safe locked with a key or code. Some said that they stored their firearms in lock boxes or cable lock boxes, and a few indicated they used gun locks or trigger locks. As previously noted, some participants who owned multiple firearms indicated that they stored some of their firearms differently, with some stored locked and others not. For example, participants often reported keeping all but one or two firearms locked in a safe, with the others unlocked for easy access.

“Those are his weapons that [my stepdad] keeps [in a safe] and the other ones are in a desk drawer in case we needed to get to it quickly.” [Female, 18–20, suburban]

“Pretty much 90% of the time they’re locked up and away. The only gun that’s really out is the gun [my spouse] likes to keep by the bed for just in case, emergencies or whatnot for safety [...] But I mean every other gun is locked up in the sense that we don’t access them, they’re away, they’re in the basement.” [Female, 25–34, rural]

¹ In Round 1, we asked participants who indicated they stored their firearm(s) unloaded how they defined “unloaded.” In Round 2, we defined “unloaded” for participants before asking if they stored their firearm(s) unloaded.

A few participants additionally noted that a key part of this practice was ensuring that only they or other responsible members of the household had access to the key or code to the safe.

In addition to discussing storage practices when firearms were at home, some participants also indicated that they carried their firearms with them when they left the house—of these, most said that they stored their firearm on their person, such as in a hip or ankle holster or belly band, when they were outside the home. A few mentioned that they stored their firearm in a locked glovebox in their car, in a locked gun box in their car, or in an unlocked backpack or purse when they carried a firearm outside the home. Participants also mentioned storing larger firearms, such as rifles, in their cars when transporting them to and from shooting ranges or on their way to hunt or recreate.

Storing Firearms Unloaded

About half of participants reported storing all of their firearm(s) unloaded all or most of the time. Participant responses indicated that they conceptualized “unloaded” differently, based on their own interpretation or knowledge or on how their personal firearm(s) were designed. For example, some participants described “unloaded” as not having any ammunition or magazine loaded into the firearm, whereas a smaller number of participants described “unloaded” as having a magazine loaded into the firearm but not having a round chambered. Again, participants owning more than one firearm sometimes reported different storage behaviors by gun (e.g., stored all guns unloaded except one in the nightstand). Some participants also described that, because they stored their firearms locked and/or with the safety on, they did not feel the need to store them unloaded.

“We feel like it’s an added step or an added protection that if our kids [...] if he had a gun in his hand that was unloaded and the magazine was separate, it would give us an added level of protection, is the way we see it, because he would have to understand how to pop it in there, and it takes strength to push it all the way in and stuff.” [Female, 25–34, suburban]

“All the ones that are stored are unloaded. The only one that is loaded is the one [my spouse] keeps by his bed.” [Female, 25–34, rural]

“So, I don’t keep one in the chamber, so if you were to pull the trigger it wouldn’t fire, but there is ammo in the magazines which are loaded into the gun, but again, not in the chamber [...] Again, nobody should have access to it, so I don’t usually have to worry about that. So, it’s probably never unloaded unless I’m working on the firearm, like cleaning it or something.” [Male, 21–24, suburban]

Storing Ammunition in a Separate and Locked Location

Only some participants reported keeping all their ammunition in a separate locked location all or most of the time. When asked where they stored their ammunition, some participants described storing it in the same location as their firearm(s), often in a safe or lockbox with the firearm. Participants also described storing their “extra” ammunition or ammunition that would not fit in

their safe(s) in a different unlocked location, such as in an unlocked drawer, closet, or garage. Some participants described wanting to keep ammunition stored with their firearms for easy access, and/or to ensure that firearms and ammunition were stored together to better keep track of both. Of note, some participants shared that they viewed storing their ammunition locked with their firearm, such as in a safe, as safer than storing it in a separate location. Again, some participants reported storing their ammunition in different locations. For example, some ammunition was stored with firearms and some was stored separately; similarly, some described storing some of their ammunition in a locked location and other ammunition in an unlocked location.

Safe Storage Motivators

We asked participants to explain what motivates them to practice all or some of the safe storage behaviors. Many participants shared that keeping their children and/or families safe was a main motivator for storing their firearms stored safely (in general) or locked. Participants noted wanting to prevent accidents or injuries and generally wanting to keep firearms inaccessible to children. Similarly, most participants who reported storing their firearms unloaded and/or separately from ammunition cited preventing child accidents or injury as main motivators for storing their firearms in this way, in case a child ever accidentally accessed their firearms. Participants described storing firearms unloaded and/or separate from ammunition as an added layer of protection that they take to prevent accidents.

“Making sure that it can't be accidentally discharged or something like that, it's very important. I don't want that to happen. So just for my peace of mind, that's why I do that. That's why I keep the ammunition separate.” [Male, 45–65, suburban]

Some participants also reported wanting to keep their firearms stored locked to prevent theft or unauthorized access. A few participants also noted choosing safes that would be difficult to steal, such as large and/or heavy safes or safes that could be bolted into the ground or inside a cabinet. Similarly, a few participants noted storing their ammunition in a locked location to prevent theft.

“If they get the gun, they won't get the ammunition. It makes it harder for an intruder or child to get the gun and ammo at the same time.” [Male, 25–34, suburban]

Barriers to Safe Storage

We also asked participants to share reasons they did not currently practice safe storage behaviors, as well as any challenges or barriers they encountered in safely storing their firearms. Most participants who reported not practicing one or more of the recommended safe storage methods cited wanting easy access to their firearm(s) as the main reason for not practicing safe storage behaviors. Participants described wanting to be able to reach and use their firearm(s) in the event of a home invasion or other incident where they would need to use their firearm to protect themselves or others. Some participants perceived that storing firearms locked and/or unloaded would prevent them from accessing them or make it harder or more

time-intensive to access them when needed. For example, participants described storing their firearms loaded so they would not have to take time to load a firearm in the event they needed to use it.

“I just feel like you probably will never need to use it, and I just feel like I wouldn't in that moment, I don't want to have to think about ‘Where's the key? Where did I put it?’ No, the only reason [it's stored unlocked] is it being readily available.” [Female, 25–34, suburban]

Some participants noted that they did not practice recommended storage practices because they did not have children in the home, or, in a few instances, because their children were familiar with firearms and knew how to handle them safely. A few participants described not practicing recommended safe storage practices because they felt that, since they were stored hidden, out of sight, or inaccessible by children in the home (e.g., high up on a shelf that children couldn't reach), they did not feel the need to keep them stored locked.

“I don't really have to worry about anybody looking for them or finding them. Typically, they're stored out of sight, so they're not in a place where someone can just walk in and see them.” [Male, 45–65, suburban]

Finally, when asked about barriers to safe storage or challenges they've faced in safely storing their firearms, some participants noted the high cost of safes, especially if they had a large number of firearms or one or more firearms that were large in size. Participants with several firearms noted the difficulty in finding a safe that was large enough.

When asked if anything would make it easier to store their firearms safely, participants noted the following:

- more affordable safes
- larger safes or access to multiple safes
- access to biometric safes
- mobile safes to keep firearm locked in car or outside the home
- safes with automatic lights to make loading firearms in the dark easier

Campaign Materials

Other Messages About the Importance of Safe Gun Storage

We asked participants about their previous exposure to safe storage messages. Many participants had seen or heard messages about the importance of safe gun storage, though a few participants were unsure if they had. Specifically, participants saw or heard messages related to safe storage, keeping children away from firearms, or messages related to concealed carry or firearm safety classes. Participants saw or heard these messages primarily on TV ads or commercials. Participants also saw and heard these messages on the news, radio, social media, or during activities in close proximity to a firearm such as receiving a pamphlet when

purchasing a firearm, seeing a poster at the gun range, or in a hunter safety course. Participants generally had positive reactions to seeing or hearing these messages, though most said they wouldn't do anything differently based on what they had seen.

Previous Exposure to NC S.A.F.E. Campaign

We asked participants about their previous exposure to the NC S.A.F.E. campaign. Many participants had not heard of NC S.A.F.E. prior to the interviews. A few participants had heard of NC S.A.F.E., and a few others were unsure but said the campaign logo looked familiar or the campaign sounded familiar. One participant had heard the name of the campaign previously but could not recall where. Another participant had seen the logo and said the campaign was about gun control and gun legislation. The same participant said they may have seen the logo on a billboard, online, or in a commercial. Two participants who were unsure said they might have seen the NC S.A.F.E. logo on a poster at their local sheriff's office.

Video Ads

In each round, we showed participants two video ads from the NC S.A.F.E. campaign. Each ad was shown individually, and we rotated the order in which they were shown to prevent potential ordering effects. We asked participants for their feedback on each video ad.

Round 1

The two video ads we showed participants in Round 1 are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Round 1 Video Ads



It Only Takes a Moment



Your Means of Protection Needs To Be Protected

It Only Takes a Moment

This ad opened with a series of accidents, showing that it only takes a moment for a car crash, bike accident, or spilling water to happen. The ad then showed that it only takes a moment for a child rummaging through a drawer to find an unlocked firearm or for someone to steal a firearm from a vehicle. The ad closed with showing various methods for properly storing a firearm in the home or in a vehicle.

We first asked participants if they had seen this ad before and most said they had not. A few participants were unsure. One participant said they had seen this ad on TV as a commercial. Initial reactions were mostly positive. Many participants either agreed with the message or liked the ad generally. Participants also said this ad was relatable and informative.

“I like that it gives the dangers but follows it up with the solution and what you can do about it. I think it's an effective ad” [Female, 35–44, rural]

A few participants with negative reactions to the ad said it was not realistic or felt the ad was ineffective. One participant said the ad was confusing because they could not see the connection between the car crash at the beginning with the rest of the ad.

We asked participants what they think the ad is trying to get people to do. About half the participants said the ad was trying to get people to lock their firearms. Some participants said the ad was trying to make people aware of safe storage or different storage options. A few participants said the ad was trying to get people to prevent someone from gaining access to their firearm. We asked participants who they thought the ad was trying to reach. Many participants said the ad was trying to reach all firearm owners, a few participants said the ad was trying to reach everyone, and a few participants said the ad was trying to reach parents. One participant said the ad was trying to reach people who leave their gun in their car.

“Any gun owner. If you own a firearm, this ad is targeted to you. I think the legal age is 18 and over in NC, so I think the ad is for anyone who can legally purchase a firearm. Maybe even if you got the gun illegally. It's for anyone who has a gun. Like seatbelt ads that are for everyone getting in a car, regardless of if they have a license or not.” [Male, 45–65, suburban]

When asked if they thought messages in the ad would speak to gun owners, many participants said the ad would speak to all firearm owners, but the degree to which it would resonate varies based on whether or not someone is a parent, new gun owner, or keeps their firearm in a vehicle. One participant said the ad messages would speak to a small subset of firearm owners who are not thinking about storage or to newer gun owners.

We also asked participants if they thought the messages in the ad were relevant to them. Many participants said the messages in the ad were relevant to them because they were firearm owners or they already practiced safe storage. Participants also mentioned the various scenarios shown in the ad and that the inclusion of children and elderly people made the ad relevant to them. However, a few participants said the ad message was not necessarily relevant to them because they already practiced safe storage.

We asked participants if they would do anything based on the information in the ad. About half the participants said they would look into the different storage options presented in the ad. Some said they would search online or visit the campaign website for information about alternative storage options or resources. A few participants said they would talk to their family or friends about safe storage. One participant said they would double check to ensure they were following the correct safety measures. Another said they would explore a more secure hiding

spot for a firearm. A few participants said they would not do anything differently based on the information. One participant said they would not do anything differently because they already practiced firearm safety.

"My family personally, my mom, I would like to send it her way just because I know that not everyone stays on top of gun safety and gun storage. So yeah, I think it would be great to show my family it is your responsibility. It is your responsibility if something tragic were to happen. So yeah, I think it would help if I could just send it over to family members." [Female, 25–34, urban]

Suggestions for how this ad could be improved varied. Some participants suggested making the ad more dramatic by emphasizing the child in the ad or by showing the consequences of improper storage. Other suggestions from a few participants include lengthening the ad, focusing on firearms only (i.e., removing the car accident and spilled water clips), or showing additional storage options. A few participants critiqued the realism of the ad and did not find the scenario of parents leaving a firearm in a drawer to be realistic.

"The big motivation was the little girl finding the handgun—that is the motivation right there. Only takes a moment for something super bad to happen." [Male, 45–65, suburban]

We asked participants how they would change the ad to make it more motivating for someone to want to store their firearms safely. A few participants suggested incorporating more "real world" content to supplement the scenarios presented in the ad, such as statistics on injuries from improper storage; stories from family members or friends impacted by the consequences of improper storage; or relevant news stories, ideally from North Carolina. One participant suggested emphasizing the consequences of improper storage—specifically, the implications of children gaining access to a firearm. One participant suggested showing additional home storage options.

Your Means of Protection Needs To Be Protected

The ad opened with someone breaking the window of a car with crowbar to steal an unlocked firearm that was left on the center console. The ad closed with showing a woman properly locking up her firearm and storing the box before leaving it in her vehicle.

Most participants said they had not seen the ad before, though a few participants were unsure whether they had or could not remember where they may have seen it. Initial reactions leaned more negative than positive. Many participants said the scenario presented in the ad was not realistic. A few participants that had positive reactions to ad liked the message and felt the ad was informative.

"It's kind of clear cut, there's a lot of common sense. I don't know anyone that would leave their gun out like that in their car, so it's almost silly but I think everyone would agree with the message. I can't imagine any person, responsible or irresponsible gun owner, who would leave their gun in their car like that. It's fine, the message they're

trying to portray is clear and I would agree with it, I just think it's unrealistic" [Female, 35–44, rural]

We asked participants what they thought the ad was trying to get people to do. Many participants said the ad was trying to get people to secure their firearm, specifically when leaving it in a vehicle. Some participants said the ad was trying to get people to prevent someone else from gaining access to their firearm. A few participants said the ad was trying to get people to keep their gun out of sight when in a vehicle. One participant who said the ad was trying to get people to lock up their firearm mentioned that it did not need to be unloaded based on the ad. Another participant who said the ad was trying to get people to lock up their firearm also reported the ad was encouraging people to take their firearm with them if they have a license or permit to do so.

We asked participants who they thought the ad was trying to reach. Most participants said the ad is trying to reach firearm owners. Some participants who said the ad was trying to reach firearm owners specifically mentioned that it was trying to reach firearm owners who travel with a firearm or leave it in a vehicle when traveling. One participant said the ad was trying to reach concealed carry holders, another participant said younger firearm owners, and one participant said the ad was trying to reach female firearm owners. A few participants said the ad was trying to reach everyone and one participant said the ad was trying to reach people who park in public parking lots.

When asked if they think the messages in the ad would speak to gun owners, many participants said the ad would. A few participants said the ad would speak to gun owners because it showed realistic scenarios that could potentially happen. One participant said it would not, because they don't travel with their firearm in the car. One participant said the message in the ad was common sense.

"Yes. Gun owners have guns, and citizens in general, I would say a lot are careless about where they do place them. With my profession as being in law enforcement, I have done a lot of calls for stolen firearms from vehicles that were in plain view. This is a realistic scenario for some gun owners." [Male, 45–65, rural]

About half of the participants said the messages in the ad were not relevant to them because they never or rarely leave their firearm in their vehicle or they keep their firearm safely stored or out of sight when storing in their vehicle. One participant also said the messages were not relevant because they are common sense, and another participant said it was not relevant because of concealed carry laws. Some participants said the messages in the ad were relevant to them because the messages are a reminder of firearm safety, they have travelled with a firearm previously, or plan to travel with a firearm in the future.

We asked participants if they would do anything based on the information in the ad. About half the participants said they would not do anything based on the information in the ad. However, one participant said they would be more aware and double-check the precautions they were already taking, and another participant said they would advise someone on safe storage should they witness someone storing their firearm improperly. Some said they would not do anything

based on the ad because they do not travel with their firearm, store it in their vehicle, or they already handle their firearm properly. Some participants said they would talk to their husband about safe storage and two participants said they would talk to someone they see storing their firearm improperly about safe storage. A few participants said they would look for additional information about safe storage options or permit laws. One participant said they would not do anything differently because the ad would not catch their attention.

Suggestions for how the ad could be improved varied. Some participants did not have any suggestions for improvement. A few participants suggested showing additional safety precautions throughout the ad, such as more safe storage options or a firearm stored safely out of sight in a vehicle. One participant suggested making the ad longer by adding more firearm theft scenarios or combining this ad with the other video ad shown. Another participant suggested shortening the ad by separating it into two separate ads. One participant suggested emphasizing the consequences of improper storage, specifically the implications of what happens when a stolen firearm is used in another crime. One participant suggested showing a male actor in the same situation as a victim of firearm theft to resonate with various audiences. Another participant suggested making the ad more realistic and said the average person is not likely to leave their firearm out on the armrest of their vehicle.

We asked participants how they would change the ad to make it more motivating for someone to store their firearms properly. Some participants suggested showing parents distracted and leaving their firearm out, or consequences of improper storage such as showing a child gaining access to the firearm, or additional examples of someone breaking into a vehicle and stealing a firearm. One participant suggested adding statistics related to firearm theft from vehicles. Another participant suggested showing additional safe storage options to make the ad more educational. Another participant said they may not remember the campaign name and suggested emphasizing the logo in the ad.

Round 2

The two video ads we showed participants in Round 2 are shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Round 2 Video Ads



Father



Mother & Firearm Safety Instructor

Father

This ad is a testimonial from Baker, a father, detailing the importance of safe firearm storage. Baker described that safely storing his firearms saved his son's life by preventing his son's access. Baker also stated that for parents, there are many upsides and no downsides to safely storing their firearms.

We first asked participants if they had seen this ad before. None of the participants said they had seen it. Initial reactions to this ad were primarily positive. About half the participants agreed with the overall message of the ad and about half felt the ad appealed to their emotions. Some participants said the ad's message resonated with them personally and a few participants said the ad was informative. One participant had a negative initial reaction to the ad, saying that they disagreed that guns were the problem and the person in the ad was unlikeable and appeared to be acting.

"I definitely agree with it, definitely a potential and I know and have had family members with kids and thought of that in terms of safety with firearms. And especially with my wife and her work, not necessarily with a kid committing suicide but accidents and stuff."
[Male, 35–44, rural]

Many participants liked the overall message of the ad and the father's story. A few participants liked the length of the ad and felt it was appropriate. A few participants also liked that the ad showed the safe that the father used. Participants also noted aspects of the ad that they didn't like. A few participants said the ad needed more information, particularly about the son and how the safe saved his life (participants viewed the shorter version of this ad). One participant who had a negative initial reaction to the ad disliked the person in the ad and disagreed with the ad's overall message. One participant said the ad downplayed the importance of speedy access and another participant said the ad was judgmental toward parents who don't store their firearm the same way or who hold differing opinions.

When discussing the visual appearance of the ad, one participant said the ad was too dark. Another participant commented on the colors in the ad and suggested that other colors, like red, would stand out more on the campaign information part at the end of the ad. One participant said the ad looked political and another participant said the safe used in the ad did not appear to be reliable.

We asked participants what they thought the ad was trying to get people to do. Many participants said the ad was trying to get people to store their firearms safely. About half the participants said the ad was trying to get people to store their firearm specifically to prevent children or another loved one from accessing the firearms. One participant said the ad was trying to get people to get rid of their guns to save a child's life.

When asked who this ad was trying to reach, many participants said the ad was trying to reach parents. Some participants said the ad was trying to gun owners with and without children. Some participants said the ad was trying to reach everyone but especially those who have children or are around them. When asked if they thought the messages in the ad would speak to gun owners, most participants said it would. One participant said it would depend on the person.

About half of the participants said the ad resonated with them because they were a parent and it made them think about protecting others. One participant said the message was not relevant because they said they already stored their firearm safely and another participant said it was not relevant because they did not have children.

We asked participants if they would do anything based on the information in the ad. Some participants said they would talk to family or friends about safe storage or share information they learned with others. A few participants said they would visit the NC S.A.F.E. website and a few participants said they would look online for general information or information specifically about fast, accessible ways to store firearms. One participant said they would consider changing their current method of storage but would need to do more research. Some participants said they would not do anything based on the information in the ad because they already stored their firearm. One participant said they would not do anything because they were not a parent or caregiver.

We asked participants for suggestions of improvement. A few suggested including the son in the ad, saying the ad would be more impactful. A few participants suggested showing the safe or including specifically what effective gun storage looks like. A few participants had suggestions for the text or words used in the ad, including that it could convey that a gun can be accessible even if locked, rather than conveying a dismissive message to those who disagree. One participant suggested showing a safe of better quality. One participant said to include other populations in the ad to appear more relatable, such as someone with no kids. Other suggestions included making the ad more attention grabbing or acknowledging that mental health is the issue, not guns.

Some participants were asked how they would change the ad to make it more motivating for someone to store their firearms properly. A few participants said the ad would be more motivating if it showed the safe more prominently or pointed viewers to where they can find options for safe storage. A few participants said the ad would be more motivating if it had an even greater emotional appeal by showing unauthorized access or a tragedy. One participant said that making changes to the overall set and making it clearer that a child lives there would make the ad more motivating.

Mother and Firearm Safety Instructor

This ad is a testimonial from Jaclyn, a mother and firearm safety instructor. Jaclyn stated that while she is a supporter of the 2nd Amendment, there is also responsibility with this right. Jaclyn stated there is no reason why firearms cannot be stored securely while also remaining accessible given all the options available.

None of the participants said they had seen the ad before, though one participant said the ad was familiar but could not remember where they might have seen it. Initial reactions were primarily neutral or positive. About half the participants agreed with the overall message of the ad. A few participants said the ad was informative about various storage options. A few participants liked that the ad mentioned the Second Amendment. One participant had a negative reaction to the ad disliked the message and said it was accusatory.

“I agree with what was said that there are many options, some are more affordable than others but in terms of for me, the ones that are most affordable may not be what I think is best for personal protection at my house so waiting for one that I can afford but also have the speed/accessibility that I want. Which is hopefully never but I want to feel confident/comfortable with how quick I could access it.” [Male, 35–44, rural]

A few participants liked the ad’s overall message and a few participants liked that the ad was straightforward. A few participants liked that the ad featured a woman and a few participants liked that the ad featured a firearm safety instructor. A few participants also liked that the ad mentioned the Second Amendment. When discussing what they disliked about the ad, a few participants said the ad was not informative enough or that it was too short. A few participants mentioned the mother or environment were not realistic. For one participant, the overall message of the ad conflicted with their personal circumstances. Another participant said the ad was passive aggressive.

When asked what the ad was trying to get people to do, about half the participants said the ad was trying to get people to search for or consider using the various safe storage methods mentioned in the ad. Some participants said the ad was trying to get people to store their firearm(s) safely. One participant was unsure about what the ad was trying to get people to do.

We asked participants who they thought the ad was trying to reach. Some participants said the ad was trying to reach all gun owners, mothers or women specifically, or parents. Participants also said the ad was trying to reach everyone, newer gun owners, conservatives, or advocates of the Second Amendment.

When asked if they thought the messages in the ad would speak to gun owners, some participants said they would because the message of gun safety is relevant to gun owners. A few participants said the message would not speak to gun owners because of the negative or judgmental tone of the message or its lack of information. A few participants said it would depend on the person and whether they are receptive and not stubborn.

About half the participants said the ad was relevant to them because of their identity (i.e., they were a gun owner or a parent) or because of their current safe storage practices (i.e., they did or did not already safely store their firearms). Of the few participants who said the message was not relevant, one participant said it was because they already locked their firearms.

We asked participants if they would do anything based on the information in the ad. Some participants said they would not do anything based on the information in the ad because the ad was not compelling or motivating enough or they had negative reaction to the ad itself. Some participants said they would do their own research and look for more information about safe storage online. A few participants said they would visit the NC S.A.F.E. website. A few participants said they would talk to family or friends about safe storage or share information they learned with others.

Suggestions for how this ad could be improved varied. Some participants said the ad should include various examples of safe storage options, including a demonstration on how to use a particular safe—a few participants said this additional information could help lengthen the ad as

it was too short (participants viewed the shorter version of the ad). Other suggestions for improvement, each mentioned by one participant, included showing the three recommendations for safe storage in the ad, including the NC S.A.F.E. logo throughout the ad rather than at the end, changing the actor, or simplifying the overall language of the ad.

When asked how they would change the ad to increase motivation to store firearms properly, some participants said including more detailed information about safe storage, such as different storage options, would help. A few participants said the ad would be more motivating if it pointed viewers to cost-effective safe storage options or offered a rebate for purchasing a safe. Other suggested changes, each mentioned by one participant, included adding statistics on firearm-related accidents, emphasizing the importance of safety from a family perspective, or set design changes that would allow the actor to directly face the audience.

Static Ads

In each round, we showed participants three static ads from the NC S.A.F.E. campaign. First, we showed each ad individually, and rotated the order in which they were shown to prevent potential ordering effects. After getting feedback on each ad individually, we asked participants which ad would most inspire or motivate them to store their firearms safely, and which ad they found to be least motivating.

Round 1

Figure 5 contains the three static ads that we showed participants in Round 1.

Figure 5. Round 1 Static Ads



Doesn't Backfire

We first asked participants if they had seen this ad before. None said they had seen the ad before, though one participant said it looked similar to something they might have seen online or on TV.

Most participants reacted positively to this ad based on the image of the child touching the gun. These participants said they thought the image was effective and grabbed their attention. A few

participants also noted that it is a realistic reminder of how quickly things can happen if you don't take proper precautions.

"I think that's shocking to a lot of people...I think if you just had the picture with no words, just that alone would make people like, hold up, it's going to stop you." [Male, 45–65, suburban]

A few participants who said they did not like the ad also focused on the image of the child touching the gun, saying that they either found the image upsetting or they would not want their children to see it.

"My first thought is if it came across a tv screen, I would be afraid if my children saw it, it would pique their interest. It would make me nervous to have one of my children see it." [Female, 35–44, rural]

Some participants noted aspects of the ad that they didn't like or would suggest changing. A few participants said that the yellow coloring overlapping with the child's head was distracting and one participant suggested changing the colors, noting that bright colors didn't seem to fit with the tone of the ad. A few participants said they didn't like the use of the word "backfire." For example, one participant said that although they understood it was a play on words, they thought changing it to something like "make sure it's locked" or "make sure it's secure" would be more fitting. When asked about other ideas to make the ad more motivating, one participant suggested a split picture, keeping one side as is and changing the other side to show the child encountering a locked gun safe.

When asked what the ad was trying to get people to do, all participants said the intent of the ad was to get people to secure their firearms safely. Participants identified gun owners who either have children or know children who visit their home as the target audience for the ad. Although most participants said the ad was relevant to them, a couple of participants said it was not because they would not leave their gun in a drawer.

Most participants said they wouldn't do anything differently based on the ad because they said they already followed safe storage recommendations. A few participants said they might do things like speak to extended family about storing guns safely or do additional research online about safe storage methods.

Like Their Lives Depend On It

Only one participant reported seeing this ad before their interview, saying they had seen it on television. Most participants had a positive first reaction to the ad citing the picture of the two children. Participants described it as "attention grabbing" and "relatable." One participant said they liked that it had a similar message to "Doesn't Backfire" but did not show a child touching the gun.

"This speaks to parents. Children are number one in our lives, so it speaks to parents. Just seeing the kids, it speaks to me." [Female, 35–44, rural]

When asked what aspects of the ad that they did not like or would recommend changing, a couple of participants said they didn't particularly like the colors. One participant said they didn't like the blotch of orange and suggested making the coloring look "neater." In addition, a couple of participants said the ad lacked "urgency" or a "story." One of these participants suggested showing a gun in the background to hint at what could happen if a child found an unlocked firearm.

When asked what the ad was trying to get people to do, most participants said the message was that you need to protect children by storing firearms safely. Most participants said the ad was aimed at parents of young children, though a few participants said it would be relevant to anyone who interacts with children.

Although most participants said they wouldn't do anything differently based on the ad because they were already storing their firearms safely, a few said they would think more about how they store their guns and double-check that they are being safe.

"Make sure I am double checking that not just anybody could stumble across things or have access to things they shouldn't. Double down on the safety. These messages with the kids make me want to double check everything that I'm doing." [Male, 25–34, suburban]

One participant said they would go to NC S.A.F.E.'s website to get more information on the organization.

Be Responsible for Your Gun

None of the participants could recall seeing this ad before their interview. Overall, reactions to this ad were positive. Some participants said they liked that the ad showed a solution to the problem, as well as an option for a gun lock that they thought might not be as well known as lock boxes and safes.

"This one is a little more motivating to me. The lock is intriguing to me, it makes me interested. More like I'm going to look into this. We don't have more room in our safe, so this might be another way to store if we got more firearms" [Female, 35–44, rural]

Other participants commented that they liked the direct message that you are responsible for keeping your firearm safe.

"I like that its bringing awareness to the fact that even if you're not responsible for pulling the trigger, you're still responsible for your firearm. If somebody get a hold of your firearm and commits a tragic crime, you're just as responsible for that. I can easily be responsible for a tragedy even if I'm not the one directly responsible for it." [Female, 25–34, urban]

When asked what participants didn't like about the ad or what could be improved, a few participants commented on the splashes of color, noting that they made the ad look "messy" and distracted from the message. Other recommendations include bolding the full statement

(i.e., **Be responsible for your gun so you are not part of a tragedy**), including the website address for NC S.A.F.E., and including a link to purchase the lock shown.

All participants identified gun owners as the target audience for this ad, with most saying the ad was relevant to them. A few participants who viewed at least one of the other ads first said that this ad may have a wider appeal and be relevant to all gun owners compared to the other ads aimed at people with young children in the home. Although most participants said they wouldn't do anything as a result of the ad, a few participants said they would look into the trigger lock shown in the ad.

Ad Comparison

Although responses were mixed, most participants identified “Doesn't Backfire” as the most motivating ad and “Be Responsible for Your Gun” as least motivating (see **Table 6**).

Table 6. Most and Least Motivating Ads

	Most Motivating	Least Motivating
Doesn't Backfire	7	3
Like Their Lives Depend On It	4	3
Be Responsible for Your Gun	4	9

Participants who identified “Doesn't Backfire” as the most motivating ad said that the image of the girl touching the gun was “shocking” and “powerful” and that the tagline captured their attention.

“Just because of the little girl and the gun in the picture together, finding the gun. I think that's shocking to a lot of people.” [Male, 45–65, suburban]

Participants who identified “Be Responsible for Your Gun” as the least motivating ad said that it didn't capture their attention the way the other two ads did, with some saying that they found the ads with children more relevant to them because they were parents.

“Yeah, it's just that the picture of her locking up the gun, I guess it's not very motivating for me personally. I don't know, I guess I am a mom, so I just see those kids and I'm like, oh my gosh, you got to keep 'em safe. But yeah, I would say that third one is the least motivating for me personally.” [Female, 25–34, urban]

One participant also said they found this ad the least motivating because it didn't show the “why” like the other ads did.

Round 2

In the second round of interviews, we showed participants three different static ads (see **Figure 6**).

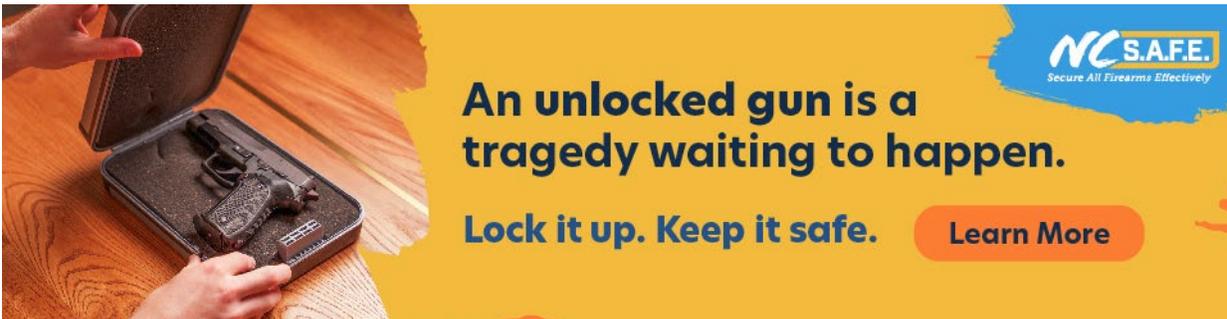
Figure 6. Round 2 Static Ads



Don't Become Their Next Target



Don't Compromise Your Family's Safety



An Unlocked Gun is a Tragedy Waiting to Happen

Don't Become Their Next Target

None of the participants said they had seen this ad before, and reactions were mixed. Some participants liked the ad, saying that it was a realistic scenario, whereas others said they either didn't immediately understand the message or they disagreed with it. For example, a few participants said they didn't like the use of the word "target" because they associated it more with a person being a victim rather than an inanimate object.

"Don't [be] their next target. For me, that means looking at that photo, it means don't be the next target of a person and not necessarily don't be the next [victim of a theft]."
[Female, 18–20, female, suburban]

"No, I didn't immediately [understand the message], the picture was a little bit just kind of like you have to look at it for a second and then it just feels don't be there next. Again,

when I read, don't be there next. Target. It felt like get yourself a gun. You don't want to be a target. And then it says, lock your gun, keep it safe. So I don't like this." [Female, 25–34, suburban]

When asked how the ad could be improved, suggestions included changing the word “target” to something that more directly points to the gun itself being stolen, showing the gun in a locked case so that the person is not able to access it, and changing the background for “Learn More” to white so the words stand out more.

When asked what the ad was trying to get people to do, most participants said the message was to lock guns in a safe place, though one participant said this was confusing because they had assumed the gun was in a locked car and locked glove compartment so they didn't know what else the gun owner could do.

When asked who the ad was trying to reach, some participants said all gun owners, whereas some others said gun owners who have a concealed carry permit or vehicle. When asked if they would do anything as a result of seeing the ad, some participants said they might, with most saying they might click on “Learn More.” One participant said they would share information with others who kept guns in their car.

Don't Compromise Your Family's Safety

None of the participants reported having seen this ad previously. Responses to the ad were mixed. Some participants liked the picture and said that it conveyed the message that you need to store your guns safely to protect your children.

“I like the ads that show the love of the emotion that is trying to portray. It says don't compromise your family safety. You always lock up your guns. That is a perfect example of showing as a mother hugging her son, her loving her son, how she wants her son. I go, and if you don't have a safe area for him, then that's not, that's compromising... It's your family safety, the mother hugging or child. I mean, that's pretty impactful.” [Female 18–20, female, suburban]

Other participants said they would prefer a direct message about safe storage.

“It only mentions the gun in that smaller white part. So it just feels like the image doesn't convey that it's about firearm safety, and that yellow, broader text doesn't convey that it's about firearm safety, so you would just have to understand that from just that bottom white text. So I don't know how much I like that, how that's worded and how that message is conveyed, I guess.” [Female, 25–34, rural]

Overall, participants liked the colors and font used in the ad, but a few suggested changes such as moving the NC S.A.F.E. logo to the other side so it doesn't cut off the picture, making the logo and the text under it larger, and changing the background of “Learn More” to white so the text stands out more.

When asked what the ad was trying to get them to do, most participants said its intention was to get them to store firearms safely. Some participants identified all gun owners as the target

audience for this ad, while some others identified gun owners with young children or new gun owners as the target audience. When asked if they would do anything differently as a result of seeing the ad, most participants said they wouldn't do anything differently because they already stored their gun safely but that the ad was a good reminder. A few participants said they might click on the "Learn More" link.

An Unlocked Gun Is a Tragedy Waiting to Happen

None of the participants reported having seen this ad before their interview. Reactions to this ad were mixed. Although a few participants said the ad was "eye-catching" and the message was clear, others identified things they either didn't like about the ad or that they thought should change. A few participants commented on the hands shown in the ad, saying it would be more impactful to show whose hands they were. A couple of these participants suggested showing a child's hands. A few other participants commented on the coloring, saying that they didn't like the yellow and recommending making the colors "softer." Other recommendations around coloring included making the blue darker and using a different color for the "Learn More" button so it would stand out more. A couple of participants suggested adding a QR code, either instead of or in addition to the "Learn More" button.

Although most participants said they understood what the ad was trying to get them to do (store their firearm safely), a couple of participants either disagreed with the message or said it was confusing.

"I understand the safety and I understand the truth behind it, but I think an unlocked gun is not necessarily a tragedy waiting to happen in terms of for my situation right now, if it could be a lifesaving option waiting to happen, since I don't have the type of lock where I could access it quickly, if the emergency were to occur, then it could be a tragedy for me or my family that it is locked up the only way that I have access to locking it up. So for me right now, not having it locked up for the purpose of personal protection is the safest way." [Male, 35–44, rural]

"So this might be a little confusing because, and correct me if I'm wrong, it is almost like it's implying that the box that is in the ad isn't safe... Yeah, either it's not safe or it's not up to the standards that the NC S.A.F.E. might expect." [Male, 21–24, suburban]

When asked who the ad was trying to reach, participants provided a range of responses, including all gun owners, new gun owners, gun owners with children, people who use guns mainly for personal protection, and the general public.

Although most participants said they wouldn't do anything differently as a result of the ad because they were already storing their firearms safely, a couple of participants said they might go to the NC S.A.F.E. website and one participant said they might check in with their father to make sure he stores his firearms properly.

Ad Comparison

Table 7 reports findings for the most and least motivating ads. "Don't Become Their Next Target" and "Don't Compromise Your Family's Safety" were each chosen by six participants as the most

motivating. Participants who chose “Don’t Become Their Next Target” said they found the situation relatable because they take their guns out of the house, and it was a good reminder to make sure they are being safe. Participants who chose “Don’t Compromise Your Family’s Safety” as most motivating said they chose it because it was relatable, since they had young children in the home.

“Don’t Become Their Next Target” and “An Unlocked Gun Is a Tragedy Waiting to Happen” were both identified as least motivating by six participants. Participants who chose “Don’t Become Their Next Target” as least motivating provided various reasons, such as it being less relatable than the other ads, the fact that the ad doesn’t offer a solution, and that it just didn’t appeal to them. Participants who chose “An Unlocked Gun Is a Tragedy Waiting to Happen” as the least motivating reported that the ad didn’t evoke fear or elicit emotion, that it seemed geared toward inexperienced gun owners, and that they disliked the colors used in the ad.

Table 7. Most and Least Motivating Ads

Ad	Most Motivating	Least Motivating
Don’t Become Their Next Target	6	6
Don’t Compromise Your Family’s Safety	6	4
An Unlocked Gun Is a Tragedy Waiting to Happen	3	6

Trust in NC S.A.F.E.

After discussing all ads, we asked participants how much they trusted NC S.A.F.E. as the source or messenger of the ads. Many participants said they would trust NC S.A.F.E. for information about safe storage methods. Most of these participants discussed having trust in NC S.A.F.E. because it appears to be sponsored by the state (.org address) and it includes a website to get more information.

“I mean, I’ve never heard of it, but I think the fact that it has NC in front of it, it’s obviously state sponsored. In my mind, that’s what I would think. So I would trust it a little more than just seeing some random ad that I’ve never heard of.” [Female, 25–34, rural]

A few participants also discussed trusting NC S.A.F.E. because the ads focused on safety rather than the politics of gun ownership and the ads were of good quality.

“Yeah, I feel like there’s a lot of trust. I feel like that the ads are of good quality and they’re very well intended. They’re trying to prevent tragedies, which is very good. So I have a lot of respect for that.” [Male, 35–44, suburban]

Some participants said they didn’t have enough information about NC S.A.F.E. to make a judgment on trust. Some of these participants said they would look at the website to make a determination. A few participants said they wouldn’t trust NC S.A.F.E.—most of these participants said they would prefer to get information from sheriff/police departments, state troopers, or hunter safety classes.

Ad Placement

To end the interview, we asked participants where they thought these ads should be placed to reach people who own firearms. Participants mentioned the following locations most often.

- gun shops, stores that sell guns, websites that sell guns
- shooting ranges
- billboards
- online (e.g., YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, X, TikTok)
- TV, cable or streaming services
- in the community (e.g., store windows, lampposts, bus stops, museums)

A few participants also mentioned including print ads in newspapers or magazines to reach people who may not be online.

Social Media Listening

Below, we summarize findings from two waves of social media listening conducted over the full duration of the NC S.A.F.E. campaign to date (May 2023–July 2025).

Organic Social Media Posts by NC S.A.F.E.

Across Facebook, Instagram, and X, N.C. S.A.F.E. actively used its own channels to reinforce campaign messaging, sharing a total of 542 organic posts. Instagram generated the largest overall reach and the most engagement, followed by Facebook.

Table 8. Number of Organic Mentions, Impressions, and Engagements by Platform

Platform	Mentions	Impressions	Engagements
Facebook	71	44,455	1,094
Instagram	201	93,429	1,599
X	270	35,802	253
Total	542	173,686	2,946

Earned Social Media Mention Volume Over Time

During the campaign, we detected 954 unique earned social media mentions of the campaign across Facebook, Instagram, and X. Figure 7 depicts the monthly volume of unique earned mentions by platform throughout the campaign period. Peaks in activity, particularly in June each year, were driven by NC S.A.F.E.'s annual Week of Action and its associated media coverage and community events.

Figure 7. Monthly Volume of Earned Social Media Unique Mentions Over Time by Platform

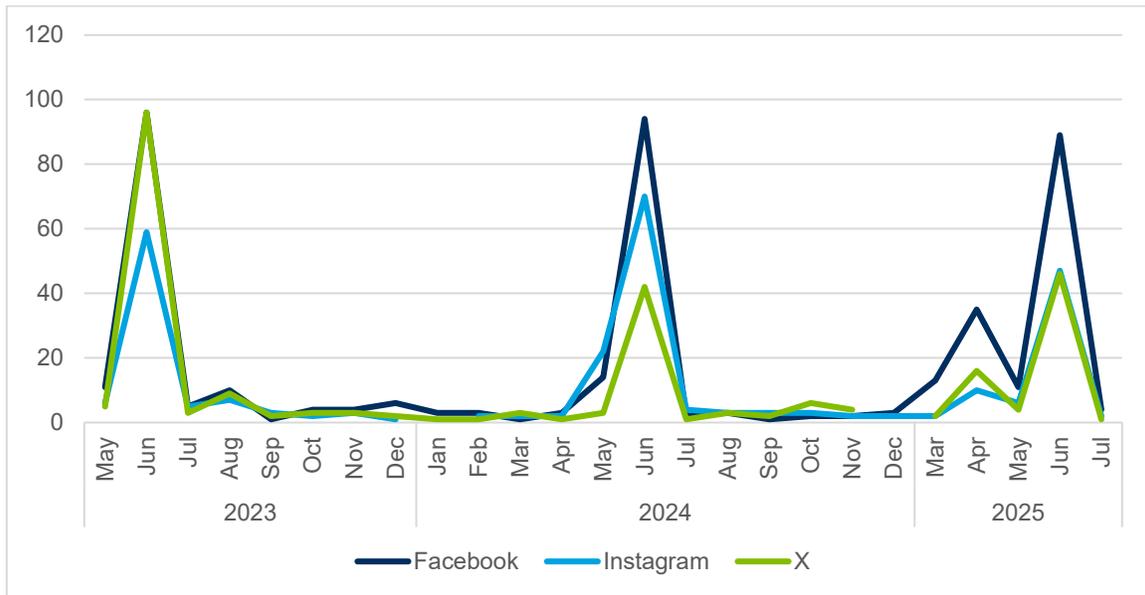


Table 9 summarizes the number of accounts, unique mentions, impressions, and engagements across platforms. Facebook drove the majority of earned mentions, impressions, and engagements.

Table 9. Number of Earned Media Accounts, Unique Mentions, Impressions, and Engagements by Platform

Platform	Accounts	Mentions	Impressions	Engagements
Facebook	206	427	873,642	8,191
Instagram	93	268	288,755	4,307
X	109	259	245,107	2,488
Total	408^a	954	1,407,504	14,986

^a Accounts were de-duplicated within platforms, but not across platforms.

Earned Social Media Posts by Organizational Category

Table 10 presents the top organization types posting earned social media content about the NC S.A.F.E. campaign across platforms. Law enforcement and public safety accounts generated the most mentions on Facebook, Instagram, and overall. Public health, advocacy and nonprofit, and media and news organizations were also among the top organization types sharing campaign messages.

Table 10. Top Organization Types Posting Earned Content, by Platform and Overall Unique Mentions

Account Type	Mentions
Overall	
Law Enforcement & Public Safety	250
Public Health	163
Advocacy or Nonprofit	127
Facebook	
Law Enforcement & Public Safety	109
Public Health	72
Advocacy or nonprofit	69
Instagram	
Law Enforcement & Public Safety	84
Advocacy or Nonprofit	44
Public Health	42
X	
Media & News	56
Law Enforcement & Public Safety	51
Public Health	45

Table 11 summarizes the top organizational account types by impressions across platforms. Law enforcement and public safety accounts again generated the highest overall visibility, followed by media and news and political figures or parties accounts. Public health, healthcare organizations, and government (non–public health) also contributed substantially to campaign visibility.

Table 11. Top Organizational Accounts by Platform Posting Earned Content, by Overall Impressions

Account Type	Impressions
Overall	
Law Enforcement & Public Safety	781,570
Media & News	128,269
Political Figures or Parties	123,015
Facebook	
Law Enforcement & Public Safety	558,493
Government (non–Public Health)	83,211
Public Health	77,139
Instagram	
Law Enforcement & Public Safety	179,214
Healthcare Organization	36,873
Government (non–Public Health)	22,668
X	
Political Figures or Parties	93,305
Media & News	59,854
Law Enforcement & Public Safety	43,458

Earned Social Media Top Accounts, Mention Summary, and Major Themes By Platform

Facebook Mention Summary

- The *Greenville Police Department*, a law enforcement agency, [shared a post](#) emphasizing the importance of proactive policing and responsible firearm ownership after seizing illegally possessed weapons during a traffic stop. The message generated the highest reach and engagement for the campaign on Facebook with **42,000 impressions and 569 engagements**.
- *Former NC Governor Roy Cooper* announced the NC S.A.F.E. initiative in June 2023. His [initial post](#) amplifying the launch generated the second-highest engagement on Facebook with **511 total interactions**. A [related post](#) that same week promoting his participation in NC S.A.F.E. Week of Action received **399 engagements**. Both posts reflect strong public response to visible state leadership on firearm safety and prevention.
- The *City of Fayetteville Government* honored the life of 8-year-old Jenesis Dockery and promoted the Live Like Jenesis initiative in June 2024, partnering with NC S.A.F.E. to distribute free gun locks and discuss firearm safety. [The post](#) garnered **39,400 impressions and 148 engagements**. Nearly 1 year later, in June 2025, the *Fayetteville*

Police Department [revisited Jenesis' story](#) as part of Gun Violence Awareness Month, generating 204 engagements. Together, these posts emphasize the emotional impact and resonance of real-life stories in firearm safety messaging.

- The *Cabarrus County Sheriff's Office* highlighted their participation in a First Responder's Spring Day event, where public safety agencies distributed firearm locks and NC S.A.F.E. materials. [The post](#) received **8,400 impressions and 112 engagements**, showcasing how community-based events can strengthen public awareness and encourage conversations around secure firearm storage.

Table 12. Top 10 Facebook Accounts Posting Earned Content, by Overall Impressions

Rank	Account	Account Type	Impressions
1	Fayetteville Police Department	Law Enforcement & Public Safety	108,400
2	Greenville Police Department	Law Enforcement & Public Safety	82,900
3	North Carolina Department of Public Safety	Law Enforcement & Public Safety	61,898
4	NC Department of Health and Human Services	Public Health	52,300
5	Asheville Police Department	Law Enforcement & Public Safety	46,200
6	Guilford County Sheriff's Office	Law Enforcement & Public Safety	45,200
7	City of Fayetteville Government	Government (Non-Public Health)	39,400
8	Cabarrus County Sheriff's Office	Law Enforcement & Public Safety	32,200
9	Raleigh Police Department	Law Enforcement & Public Safety	25,500
10	Governor Roy Cooper and Josh Stein	Political Figure or Party	24,300

Facebook Major Themes

On Facebook, messaging focused on community connection and collaboration, reflecting strong partnerships among police departments, state leaders, and local government organizations. The overall tone was serious yet hopeful, with posts reinforcing the campaign's central message of promoting public safety and encouraging responsible firearm ownership across North Carolina.

Three major themes emerged across Facebook posts for the duration of the campaign:

1. **Community partnership:** Collaboration between police departments, city governments, local organizations, and the NC S.A.F.E. campaign was evident across many posts. These messages often highlighted community events, firearm lock giveaways, and opportunities for the public to learn more about secure storage. They demonstrated how agencies and organizations are working together to make firearm safety a shared community goal.
2. **Leadership amplification:** Messages from state leaders and local law enforcement agencies amplified NC S.A.F.E.'s visibility and credibility. Their participation reinforced statewide support for firearm safety and served as an example of proactive advocacy.

3. **Empathy and remembrance:** Several posts honored victims of firearm incidents or shared community stories tied to remembrance observances, such as Gun Violence Awareness Month (June). These emotional messages connected safety advocacy to real-life impact, helping audiences engage on a more personal level.

Instagram Mention Summary

- The *Raleigh Police Department* shared a [carousel of photos](#) in July 2023 highlighting a partnership-driven firearm safety and community engagement event, generating the highest number of **impressions (10,500)** and a large number of **engagements (209)** on Instagram. A [follow-up video](#) in October 2023 that showed police officers promoting another community event distributing free gun locks garnered **9,200 impressions and 100 engagements**.
- The *Greenville Police Department* shared [the same post](#) from Facebook, emphasizing the importance of proactive policing and responsible firearm ownership after seizing illegally possessed weapons during a traffic stop. This post also performed strongly on Instagram, with **8,400 impressions and 278 engagements**, demonstrating consistent engagement across platforms.
- *Duke Health* highlighted a pediatric initiative distributing firearm locks through Duke Children's Primary Care, emphasizing family protection and prevention. [The post](#) earned **7,900 impressions and 249 engagements**, demonstrating strong resonance for health-framed prevention content on Instagram.
- The *Winston-Salem Police Department* promoted NC S.A.F.E.'s Week of Action, encouraging residents to pick up free gun locks and take proactive measures to contribute to community safety. [The post](#) reached **6,100 impressions and 105 engagements**, reinforcing how timely campaign moments can help to increase public awareness and engagement.

Table 13. Top 10 Instagram Accounts Posting Earned Content, by Overall Impressions

Rank	Account	Account Type	Impressions
1	Raleigh Police Department	Law Enforcement & Public Safety	62,700
2	North Carolina Department of Public Safety	Law Enforcement & Public Safety	36,248
3	Duke Health	Healthcare Organization	32,400
4	Fayetteville Police Department	Law Enforcement & Public Safety	21,500
5	Greenville Police Department	Law Enforcement & Public Safety	18,800
6	Asheville Police Department	Law Enforcement & Public Safety	13,300
7	North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services	Public Health	11,987
8	Greensboro Police Department	Law Enforcement & Public Safety	8,500
9	Buncombe County Government	Government (Non-Public Health)	8,055
10	Winston-Salem Police Department	Law Enforcement & Public Safety	6,100

Instagram Major Themes

On Instagram, content emphasized visual storytelling and local engagement, featuring officers, healthcare professionals, and community partners sharing firearm safety messages through photos and short videos. The overall tone was informative and approachable, using relatable visuals and concise messaging to promote prevention, family safety, and community involvement in firearm safety practices.

Three major themes emerged across Instagram posts for the duration of the campaign:

1. **Community storytelling:** Officer spotlights, short videos, and photo posts emphasized real people promoting safe storage, helping translate NC S.A.F.E.'s mission into relatable, shareable visuals.
2. **Health and family prevention:** Healthcare partners, including Duke Health, framed firearm safety as part of family and pediatric well-being, reinforcing prevention as a public-health issue.
3. **Community partnership:** Collaboration between police departments, healthcare organizations, and community partners was a recurring theme on Instagram, reinforcing the same types of messages highlighted on Facebook. Posts frequently showcased officers, healthcare professionals, and local leaders promoting firearm safety tips, distributing gun locks, and participating in community events, including NC S.A.F.E.'s Week of Action.

X Mention Summary

- *Former NC Governor Roy Cooper* shared multiple posts highlighting the launch of the NC S.A.F.E. initiative in 2023. His [announcement post](#) earned **52,400 impressions** and **670 engagements**, the highest total on X. Once Josh Stein was elected NC Governor in

2024, he continued promoting the campaign on X, and these posts achieved similarly strong engagement levels, reflecting strong audience response to leadership-driven safety messaging.

- The *Raleigh Police Department* account shared two posts ([here](#) and [here](#)) promoting local events where free gun locks were provided, each generating over **6,000 impressions and 20 engagements**.
- *Forward Carolina*, an advocacy organization, amplified the campaign with a focus on child safety and family protection, highlighting the importance of secure firearm storage to keep kids safe. The post achieved strong engagement (**90 engagements**) compared to other posts on X.
- Several media and news organizations, including *ABC11 (WTVD)*, covered several NC S.A.F.E. events, with two posts ([here](#) and [here](#)) each surpassing **4,000 impressions**, illustrating the role of media partners in lifting campaign visibility.

Table 14. Top 10 X Accounts Posting Earned Content, by Overall Impressions

Rank	Account	Account Type	Impressions
1	NC_Governor	Political Figure or Party	90,973
2	ABC11_WTVD	Media & News	22,864
3	Raleigh Police	Law Enforcement & Public Safety	18,219
4	NC Public Safety	Law Enforcement & Public Safety	15,116
5	NCDHHS	Public Health	13,475
6	NC Attorney General	Government (Non-Public Health)	6,951
7	The News & Observer	Media & News	6,256
8	Fayetteville PD	Law Enforcement & Public Safety	5,632
9	WUNC	Media & News	5,389
10	WRAL News in NC	Media & News	4,902

X Major Themes

On X, messaging was concise, timely, and advocacy-driven, leveraging the platform’s real-time nature to share leadership announcements, event updates, and prevention tips. The overall tone was direct and action-oriented, with posts using consistent campaign language and encouraging followers to participate in local NC S.A.F.E. events.

Three major themes emerged across X posts for the duration of the campaign:

1. **Leadership amplification:** Similar to posts on Facebook, posts from Governor Cooper, then–Attorney General Josh Stein, and other state leadership agencies boosted the campaign’s credibility and visibility through concise, shareable announcements.

2. **Community engagement:** Agencies and news organizations used X to promote local events, gun-lock distributions, and timely reminders, leveraging the platform's immediacy to drive participation.
3. **Child and family safety:** Posts with high engagement framed firearm safety around protecting children and families. This theme emphasized prevention, responsibility, and compassion, helping audiences connect personally with the campaign's purpose.

Outcome Evaluation

Descriptive Statistics

A total of 2,395 participants completed the survey: 1,404 in Wave 1 and 991 in Wave 2. Wave 2 had a repeat participant response rate of 33%. Table 15 includes unweighted participant counts and weighted means. In the weighted sample, the average age is 50.4 with 27.6% falling in the 50–64 year age range. The weighted sample is 56.1% male, 72.9% white non-Hispanic (NH), and 43.2% conservative. Most (86.3%) live in an urban county, 32.2% have less than a high school degree, 27.9% have an income in the \$0–\$30,000 range, 86.6% have never served in the military, 63.1% do not have a child in their household, and 58.6% are employed full time or part time. Nearly half of participants (49.1%) are married, 73.2% have completed or are currently taking a firearm training course, and 37.7% have a low media use. Over half of participants (50.4%) own 2–5 guns with the majority (83.5%) of these being handguns, 15.1% of the sample store their firearms safely, and 21.2% store their firearms semi-safely. The composition of the participants in Wave 1 compared to Wave 2 is not significantly different with a few exceptions. There are significantly fewer participants with moderate political beliefs in Wave 2 compared to Wave 1, and significantly more participants with children in their home in Wave 2 compared to Wave 1. Participants who store their gun(s) safely tend to be female (20.5%, $F = 24.86$, $p=0.000$), liberal (16.8%) or moderate (16.8%) compared to conservative (12.0%) or other (7.7%) ($F = 2.96$, $p = 0.031$), and live in an urban county (16.0%, $F = 11.26$, $p = 0.001$).

Table 15. Participant Characteristics Overall and by Wave – Weighted

Demographic Characteristics	Overall N = 2,395		Longitudinal N = 469		Wave 1 N = 1,404		Wave 2 N = 991		F-test	
	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	F-stat	P-value
Age (categorical)										
18–24	282	8.0%	59	8.0%	168	8.0%	114	8.0%	0.00	0.980
25–34	426	15.3%	97	15.4%	236	15.4%	190	15.2%	0.01	0.929
35–49	735	23.3%	147	22.2%	389	23.4%	346	23.2%	0.01	0.935
50–64	588	27.6%	97	28.6%	382	27.5%	206	27.7%	0.01	0.926
65+	364	25.8%	69	25.7%	229	25.7%	135	25.8%	0.00	0.973
Age (continuous)	.	50.4	.	50.7	.	50.4	.	50.4	0.00	0.997
Sex										
Female	1,607	43.9%	314	43.9%	942	43.9%	665	43.9%	0.00	1.000
Male	786	56.1%	154	56.1%	461	56.1%	325	56.1%	0.00	1.000
Race/Ethnicity										
Hispanic	118	3.0%	28	3.0%	69	2.9%	49	3.0%	0.00	0.967
Black NH	399	16.7%	80	16.7%	216	16.7%	183	16.7%	0.00	1.000
White NH	1,717	72.9%	338	73.1%	1,017	72.7%	700	73.1%	0.04	0.846
Multiracial or another race NH	161	7.4%	23	7.2%	102	7.6%	59	7.2%	0.08	0.775
Political Beliefs										
Liberal	493	19.3%	109	21.2%	264	17.9%	229	20.6%	1.96	0.162
Moderate	821	33.4%	169	33.0%	496	35.8%	325	31.0%	3.92	0.048
Conservative	858	43.2%	156	38.2%	495	43.2%	363	43.2%	0.00	0.982
Other	61	4.1%	11	7.6%	35	3.0%	26 ^a	5.1%	1.54	0.215
Rurality										
Urban	2,103	86.3%	421	89.3%	1,223	86.6%	880	85.9%	0.13	0.722
Rural ¹	292	13.7%	48	10.7%	181	13.4%	111	14.1%	0.13	0.722
Education										
Less than high school degree	645	32.2%	111	33.5%	405	33.3%	240	31.1%	0.81	0.367
Some college	624	22.4%	119	22.5%	375	21.9%	249	22.8%	0.22	0.639
Associate's degree	370	12.1%	73	11.8%	223	12.4%	147	11.8%	0.14	0.712
Bachelor's degree	491	22.0%	105	20.1%	262	21.6%	229	22.4%	0.16	0.689
Advanced or post-graduate degree	243	11.3%	60	12.2%	125	10.8%	118	11.8%	0.57	0.452

Demographic Characteristics	Overall N = 2,395		Longitudinal N = 469		Wave 1 N = 1,404		Wave 2 N = 991		F-test	
	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	F-stat	P-value
Income										
Less than \$30k	611	27.9%	94	31.6%	380	28.5%	231	27.2%	0.28	0.595
\$30k - under \$50k	547	25.9%	100	26.7%	329	26.8%	218	25.1%	0.56	0.454
\$50k - under \$80k	459	19.4%	113	17.0%	254	19.4%	205	19.5%	0.00	0.983
\$80k - \$130k+	593	26.8%	118	24.7%	326	25.4%	267	28.3%	1.77	0.183
Military Status										
Never served in the military	2,147	86.6%	431	89.0%	1,258	87.2%	889	86.1%	0.33	0.564
Currently or previously served in the military	202	13.4%	30	11.0%	112	12.8%	90	13.9%	0.33	0.564
Children in Household										
No	1,356	63.1%	264	68.5%	850	66.7%	506	59.6%	8.88	0.003
Yes	1,039	36.9%	205	31.5%	554	33.3%	485	40.4%	8.88	0.003
Employment Status										
Employed part time or more	1,468	58.6%	310	57.3%	826	58.7%	642	58.4%	0.02	0.901
Does not work	820	41.4%	148	42.7%	498	41.3%	322	41.6%	0.02	0.901
Marital Status										
Married	1,101	49.1%	228	46.7%	607	46.6%	494	51.5%	3.66	0.056
Else	1,243	50.9%	232	53.3%	764	53.4%	479	48.5%	3.66	0.056
Firearms Safety Training										
Have taken or currently taking training	1,655	73.2%	314	69.4%	930	71.1%	725	75.4%	3.70	0.055
Else	669	26.8%	144	30.6%	429	28.9%	240	24.6%	3.70	0.055
Media Use Frequency										
Low media use	905	37.7%	179	35.0%	511	36.4%	394	39.1%	1.03	0.309
Medium media use	893	35.7%	191	37.2%	540	37.3%	353	34.2%	1.54	0.215
High media use	579	26.5%	99	27.7%	340	26.3%	239	26.8%	0.04	0.842

Demographic Characteristics	Overall N = 2,395		Longitudinal N = 469		Wave 1 N = 1,404		Wave 2 N = 991		F-test	
	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	F-stat	P-value
Number of Guns at Home/Property										
0 guns	41	1.7%	6	0.6%	16 [^]	1.0%	25 [^]	2.3%	2.65	0.104
1 gun	873	37.3%	161	34.8%	518	38.0%	355	36.6%	0.32	0.573
2-5 guns	1,101	50.4%	237	51.9%	645	50.2%	456	50.6%	0.02	0.883
6+ guns	220	10.6%	37	12.7%	129	10.7%	91	10.5%	0.02	0.892
Type of Guns										
Handguns	2,032	83.5%	412	87.8%	1,188	84.8%	844	82.3%	0.98	0.322
Rifles	884	39.0%	176	40.3%	530	39.5%	354	38.6%	0.12	0.734
Shotguns	839	39.1%	160	43.7%	493	39.3%	346	38.9%	0.02	0.893
Other	34	1.1%	6	1.2%	23 [^]	1.4%	11 [^]	0.9%	1.28	0.259
Efficacy Group										
Media after Knowledge, Attitudes, and Beliefs (KABs)	1,211	50.3%	240	49.8%	707	51.5%	504	49.2%	0.89	0.346
Media before KABs	1,184	49.7%	229	50.2%	697	48.5%	487	50.8%	0.89	0.346
Practices Safe Gun Storage Behavior										
No	1,980	84.9%	393	84.0%	1,164	84.7%	816	85.1%	0.07	0.7961
Yes	415	15.1%	76	16.0%	240	15.3%	175	14.9%	0.07	0.7961
Practices Semi-safe Gun Storage Behavior										
No	1,798	78.8%	354	78.1%	1,050	77.7%	748	79.8%	1.22	0.2694
Yes	597	21.2%	115	21.9%	354	22.3%	243	20.2%	1.22	0.1694

n is unweighted; mean is weighted

[^] Sample size is less than 30, therefore estimate is unstable.

1. Rural = Neilsen County Rank 4 or greater

There were no significant differences between efficacy group overall or within each wave for any of the descriptive statistics, which verifies that the composition between each efficacy group is not significantly different.

Overall, 79.9% of the sample has seen or heard messages from NC S.A.F.E., 34.0% has seen or heard of the NC S.A.F.E. slogan or logo, which is greater than the four-comparison logos, and 58.8% are aware of at least one NC S.A.F.E. ad. Awareness of the fake ad was significantly less than each of the five real campaign ads (“Suicide” F = 333.16, p = 0.000; “Stolen or Lost” F = 327.88, p = 0.000; “Accidents Happen” F=325.16, p=0.000; “NC We Have a Problem” F =

327.47, p = 0.000; “Protect our Kids” F = 333.16, p = 0.000). Among participants who are only in Wave 1 or 2, there is no significant difference in NC S.A.F.E. messaging and in awareness of the static ads. However, brand awareness and awareness of the “Suicide” and “Stolen or Lost” did increase significantly from Wave 1 to Wave 2 (Table 16).

Table 16. Campaign Awareness Between Those Only in Wave 1 and Those Only in Wave 2 - Weighted

Awareness	Wave 1		Wave 2		F-test	
	N	Mean (CI)	N	Mean (CI)	F-stat	P-value
Seen or Heard of NC S.A.F.E. Slogan or Logo	931	26.5% (23.2%, 29.8%)	521	39.3% (33.6%, 44.9%)	15.62	0.000
Seen or Heard Messages from NC S.A.F.E.¹	255	77.9% (71.7%, 84.2%)	199	81.1% (73.7%, 88.5%)	0.41	0.521
Aware of NC S.A.F.E. Ad						
Suicide	927	26.8% (23.3%, 30.2%)	521	41.2% (35.6%, 46.9%)	19.53	0.000
Stolen or Lost	929	27.9% (24.5%, 31.3%)	521	37.9% (32.4%, 43.5%)	9.60	0.002
Static Ad Collage	931	45.8% (41.9%, 49.6%)	522	51.1% (45.4%, 56.8%)	2.27	0.132

¹ Survey question asked only of those who had seen or heard of the NC S.A.F.E. slogan or logo

In the cross-sectional sample, awareness of at least one NC S.A.F.E. ad is highest among 18-to-24-year-olds (75.0%), liberals (66.0%), those with less than a high school degree (64.1%), those employed full or part-time (62.8%), those making less than \$30,000 (68.5%), those with at least one child in their home (70.5%), those who have taken or are currently taking firearm safety training (81.6%), those with low media use (66.7%), and white NH participants (53.5%). There are no significant differences in awareness between sex, education, marriage status, rurality, or safe gun storage.

Wave 2 awareness for each metric is significantly higher compared to Wave 1 (Table 17).

Table 17. Campaign Awareness by Wave - Weighted

Awareness	Total		Wave 1		Wave 2		F-test	
	N	Mean (CI)	N	Mean (CI)	N	Mean (CI)	F-stat	P-value
Seen or Heard Messages from NC S.A.F.E.	828	79.9% (76.1%, 83.7%)	398	76.1% (70.9%, 81.3%)	430	82.4% (77.3%, 87.5%)	2.94	0.087
Seen or Heard of Slogan or Logo								
NC S.A.F.E.	2,390	34.0% (31.3%, 36.7%)	1,400	26.9% (24.2%, 29.6%)	990	41.1% (36.7%, 45.6%)	33.52	0.000
Sandy Hook Promise	2,392	31.0% (28.3%, 33.7%)	1,401	29.1% (26.2%, 31.9%)	991	32.9% (28.7%, 37.1%)	2.59	0.108
Ad Council	2,390	33.8% (31.0%, 36.5%)	1,401	31.5% (28.5%, 34.5%)	989	36.1% (31.8%, 40.4%)	3.56	0.059
Everytown	2,392	19.1% (16.8%, 21.3%)	1,401	16.1% (13.9%, 18.2%)	991	22.1% (18.3%, 25.8%)	8.87	0.003
Responsible Firearm Alliance	2,390	22.2% (19.9%, 24.4%)	1,401	22.5% (19.9%, 25.0%)	989	21.9% (18.5%, 25.3%)	0.08	0.773
Aware of at Least 1 NC S.A.F.E. Ad	2,393	58.8% (55.8%, 61.8%)	1,402	54.2% (51.0%, 57.4%)	991	63.4% (58.7%, 68.1%)	11.33	0.001
Suicide	2,383	32.8% (30.1%, 35.6%)	1,395	25.6% (22.9%, 28.4%)	988	40.1% (35.6%, 44.5%)	34.08	0.000
Stolen or Lost	2,386	32.6% (29.9%, 35.3%)	1,397	26.4% (23.7%, 29.2%)	989	38.8% (34.3%, 43.2%)	24.62	0.000
Accidents Happen	1,397	24.6% (21.8%, 27.3%)	1,397	24.6% (21.8%, 27.3%)	.	.	.	.
NC We Have a Problem	1,401	28.3% (25.5%, 31.1%)	1,401	28.3% (25.5%, 31.1%)	.	.	.	.
Protect our Kids	1,400	28.8% (25.9%, 31.6%)	1,400	28.8% (25.9%, 31.6%)	.	.	.	.
We Can All Agree On	989	37.2% (32.8%, 41.6%)	.	.	989	37.2% (32.8%, 41.6%)	.	.
Fon Dockery Testimonial	988	30.6% (26.5%, 34.8%)	.	.	988	30.6% (26.5%, 34.8%)	.	.
Don't Wonder Urban	988	39.1% (34.6%, 43.5%)	.	.	988	39.1% (34.6%, 43.5%)	.	.
Routine Rural	986	36.3% (31.9%, 40.7%)	.	.	986	36.3% (31.9%, 40.7%)	.	.
Static Ad Collage	2,388	49.1% (46.1%, 52.1%)	1,398	46.5% (43.4%, 49.7%)	990	51.7% (47.0%, 56.3%)	3.67	0.055

Between Wave 1 and Wave 2, there was a significant increase in agreement in the brand equity items “If I saw something from NC S.A.F.E., I would check it out” (F = 5.91, p = 0.015) and “NC SAFE helps remind me to store guns safely” (F = 7.72, p = 0.006) (Table 18).

Table 18. Brand Equity Items by Wave - Weighted

	Total N = 2,382		Wave 1 N = 1,404		Wave 2 N = 991		F-test	
							F-stat	P-value
NC SAFE gives me information I want	75.5%	(72.6%, 78.4%)	73.2%	(70.3%, 76.2%)	77.8%	(73.4%, 82.3%)	3.59	0.058
NC SAFE helps me understand how to store guns safely	81.9%	(79.1%, 84.7%)	79.9%	(77.1%, 82.6%)	84.0%	(79.7%, 88.2%)	3.28	0.070
NC SAFE is for people like me	75.4%	(72.4%, 78.4%)	73.6%	(70.7%, 76.6%)	77.2%	(72.6%, 81.9%)	2.01	0.156
If I saw something from NC SAFE, I would check it out	76.8%	(73.9%, 79.7%)	74.0%	(71.0%, 76.9%)	79.7%	(75.4%, 84.0%)	5.91	0.015
NC SAFE helps remind me to store guns safely	86.6%	(84.8%, 88.5%)	84.1%	(81.5%, 86.6%)	89.2%	(86.5%, 92.0%)	7.72	0.006

Participants perceived the ads to be effective. Each ad scores high on each PE metric with agreement greater than 70% and each ad averaging in the 79%–85% range (Table 19). When using the PE metrics available in both waves, Fon Dockery Testimonial had the highest PE scores (86.5%). Among PE metrics asked in both waves, agreement that ads were clear (89.8%) and believable (86.5%) scored the highest on average across all ads. The means bolded in Table 19 indicate that the PE score is above the 90% threshold.

Table 19. Mean PE Scores by Ad - Weighted

This ad...	Suicide	Lost or Stolen	Accidents Happen	NC We Have A Problem	Protect Kids	We Can All Agree On	Fon Dockery Testimonial	Don't Wonder Urban	Routine Rural
is worth remembering	82.7%	83.9%	80.7%	82.0%	80.8%	88.5%	88.8%	85.4%	83.8%
grabbed my attention	75.6%	75.5%	73.1%	71.7%	70.7%	81.8%	84.8%	82.7%	74.6%
is powerful	77.9%	74.7%	73.9%	71.3%	72.5%	84.2%	86.2%	79.5%	75.0%
is meaningful to me	73.2%	75.2%	74.9%	74.1%	73.4%	81.8%	81.6%	76.5%	75.0%
is convincing	80.0%	81.1%	78.1%	79.0%	76.8%	86.1%	85.4%	82.2%	82.8%
is clear	88.8%	91.0%	87.5%	90.3%	89.3%	91.8%	89.8%	90.6%	90.9%
is believable	85.5%	87.5%	85.3%	85.2%	84.5%	89.7%	88.9%	88.1%	87.7%
is informative^	86.8%	87.7%	-	-	-	89.2%	87.2%	86.8%	86.9%

Note: "Suicide" and "Lost or Stolen" in Wave 1 and Wave 2. "Accidents Happen," "NC We Have a Problem," "Protect Kids" in Wave 1 only. "We Can All Agree," "Fon Dockery Testimonial," "Don't Wonder Urban," and "Routine Rural" in Wave 2 only.

^ Mean available for Wave 2 only.

Change in agreement with ad-related beliefs moved in the desired direction among those who saw the campaign ads first for nine ad-related beliefs (Table 20) compared to participants who responded to questions about beliefs prior to seeing the ads in the survey. In no instances did an ad-related belief decrease significantly among those who saw the campaign ads first.

Table 20. Campaign Outcomes by Efficacy Group - Weighted

Campaign Outcomes	Total N = 2,395		Media After Ad-Related Beliefs N = 1,211		Media Before Ad-Related Beliefs N = 1,184		F-test	
	Mean	CI	Mean	CI	Mean	CI	F-stat	P-value
Ad-Related Beliefs								
Locking up my gun can reduce the risk of suicide	75.2%	(72.2%, 78.1%)	71.7%	(68.1%, 75.3%)	78.7%	(73.9%, 83.4%)	5.18	0.023
Locking up my gun with a gun lock/case/safe can reduce the risk of suicide	75.2%	(72.2%, 78.2%)	72.7%	(69.2%, 76.3%)	77.7%	(72.9%, 82.6%)	2.66	0.103
In NC, more than half of gun deaths are suicides	45.1%	(42.2%, 48.1%)	33.9%	(30.4%, 37.5%)	56.6%	(51.7%, 61.4%)	54.12	0.000
If I keep my gun in my car, I should keep it out of sight and lock my car doors	92.7%	(90.6%, 94.8%)	93.0%	(91.4%, 94.7%)	92.4%	(88.6%, 96.2%)	0.09	0.761
Every year, thousands of people lose their guns	63.3%	(60.2%, 66.4%)	57.0%	(53.2%, 60.8%)	69.6%	(64.7%, 74.6%)	15.53	0.000
Guns are often stolen from parked cars and trucks	83.5%	(81.0%, 86.0%)	80.7%	(77.6%, 83.8%)	86.4%	(82.4%, 90.4%)	4.92	0.027

Campaign Outcomes	Total N = 2,395		Media After Ad- Related Beliefs N = 1,211		Media Before Ad-Related Beliefs N = 1,184		F-test	
	Mean	CI	Mean	CI	Mean	CI	F-stat	P-value
Securing my gun can prevent an accident	93.2%	(90.8%, 95.7%)	93.8%	(92.0%, 95.5%)	92.7%	(88.2%, 97.3%)	0.17	0.678
An accident could occur if a child finds a gun	95.2%	(92.7%, 97.6%)	96.9%	(95.7%, 98.0%)	93.5%	(88.8%, 98.2%)	1.89	0.169
An accident could occur if someone steals a gun	94.3%	(92.3%, 96.3%)	94.9%	(93.3%, 96.4%)	93.7%	(90.0%, 97.4%)	0.35	0.552
It only takes a moment to secure my gun effectively	93.3%	(91.3%, 95.4%)	93.1%	(91.2%, 95.0%)	93.5%	(89.9%, 97.2%)	0.04	0.833
It's more important than ever to keep my gun secure	90.8%	(88.3%, 93.3%)	90.6%	(88.5%, 92.6%)	91.0%	(86.4%, 95.6%)	0.03	0.870
Gun deaths among children and youth are on the rise	77.1%	(74.3%, 80.0%)	74.0%	(70.5%, 77.5%)	80.3%	(75.8%, 84.8%)	4.73	0.030
Gun thefts are on the rise, especially from cars	76.5%	(73.5%, 79.5%)	71.0%	(67.5%, 74.6%)	82.0%	(77.1%, 87.0%)	12.50	0.000
When I keep my guns safe, I am keeping my kids safe	91.3%	(88.8%, 93.8%)	92.1%	(90.1%, 94.1%)	90.5%	(85.9%, 95.0%)	0.41	0.522
When I keep my guns safe, I am keeping my community safe	88.3%	(85.6%, 90.9%)	88.8%	(86.4%, 91.1%)	87.8%	(83.0%, 92.5%)	0.14	0.713
More than 100 children and youth die by gun violence in NC every year	65.1%	(62.0%, 68.2%)	61.8%	(58.0%, 65.7%)	68.5%	(63.5%, 73.5%)	4.26	0.039
Locking up my gun can be dangerous if I can't get to it fast enough	47.0%	(44.1%, 49.8%)	52.2%	(48.4%, 55.9%)	41.7%	(37.6%, 45.7%)	13.85	0.000
Locking up my gun is only important if there are children around	25.5%	(23.1%, 27.9%)	28.4%	(25.1%, 31.7%)	22.5%	(19.2%, 25.8%)	6.19	0.013
Storing my gun in a safe puts me at a greater risk of harm	24.6%	(22.3%, 27.0%)	25.7%	(22.3%, 29.0%)	23.6%	(20.4%, 26.7%)	0.82	0.367
Securing my gun won't reduce the risk of suicide ¹	26.9%	(24.0%, 29.8%)	27.3%	(23.3%, 31.4%)	26.4%	(22.3%, 30.5%)	0.10	0.751
Securing my gun won't reduce the risk of gun accidents	17.8%	(15.3%, 20.3%)	18.0%	(14.5%, 21.6%)	17.5%	(14.1%, 20.9%)	0.04	0.833
An unlocked gun is a tragedy waiting to happen	74.6%	(71.6%, 77.5%)	71.4%	(67.9%, 74.9%)	77.8%	(72.9%, 82.6%)	4.38	0.036
My gun is my responsibility	97.3%	(96.6%, 98.1%)	97.3%	(96.2%, 98.4%)	97.4%	(96.3%, 98.4%)	0.00	0.953
I should know how to handle my gun/safely store it to not make a rookie mistake	94.8%	(92.5%, 97.2%)	96.0%	(94.5%, 97.4%)	93.7%	(89.2%, 98.2%)	0.89	0.346
Owning a gun to protect my family can backfire if I don't store it safely	88.3%	(85.6%, 90.9%)	88.9%	(86.5%, 91.3%)	87.6%	(82.9%, 92.2%)	0.27	0.602

	Total N = 2,395		Media After Ad- Related Beliefs N = 1,211		Media Before Ad-Related Beliefs N = 1,184		F-test	
	Mean	CI	Mean	CI	Mean	CI	F-stat	P-value
Campaign Outcomes								
My family is counting on me to protect them so I should lock up my gun safely	80.7%	(77.8%, 83.6%)	78.5%	(75.2%, 81.8%)	83.0%	(78.2%, 87.7%)	2.33	0.127
I should have a conversation with my children about what to do around guns2	92.5%	(88.7%, 96.3%)	94.4%	(91.9%, 97.0%)	90.6%	(83.6%, 97.5%)	1.05	0.306
Safe gun storage should be part of my routine2	93.5%	(89.8%, 97.2%)	95.8%	(93.9%, 97.8%)	91.3%	(84.3%, 98.2%)	1.51	0.219
Safe Gun Storage Knowledge								
Correctly Identified Safe Gun Storage	52.7%	(49.7%, 55.8%)	51.3%	(47.4%, 55.2%)	54.2%	(49.5%, 58.9%)	0.88	0.349
Correctly Identified Semi-Safe Gun Storage	61.7%	(58.6%, 64.8%)	58.5%	(54.6%, 62.4%)	64.9%	(60.0%, 69.9%)	3.96	0.047
Participants' correct knowledge of NC gun laws	66.7%	(63.7%, 69.7%)	65.6%	(62.0%, 69.2%)	67.8%	(63.0%, 72.6%)	0.49	0.484
What does Safe and Secure Gun Storage Mean to You?								
Locked in a safe/gun box/cable lock	88.5%	(85.9%, 91.2%)	87.3%	(84.6%, 90.0%)	89.8%	(85.1%, 94.4%)	0.83	0.362
Unloaded	64.9%	(61.8%, 68.1%)	62.1%	(58.2%, 66.0%)	67.8%	(62.9%, 72.8%)	3.13	0.077
Separated from ammunition	66.9%	(63.8%, 70.0%)	66.0%	(62.2%, 69.9%)	67.8%	(63.0%, 72.6%)	0.33	0.566
Loaded	22.8%	(20.4%, 25.2%)	23.7%	(20.5%, 26.9%)	21.9%	(18.3%, 25.5%)	0.57	0.449
Unlocked	18.6%	(16.3%, 20.8%)	19.5%	(16.5%, 22.5%)	17.6%	(14.3%, 20.8%)	0.77	0.382
Hidden	75.8%	(73.0%, 78.7%)	77.4%	(74.3%, 80.6%)	74.2%	(69.4%, 79.0%)	1.19	0.275
Firearm Storage Intentions								
I will lock up my gun(s) in my home	86.6%	(83.9%, 89.3%)	85.8%	(82.9%, 88.7%)	87.4%	(82.7%, 92.0%)	0.31	0.578
I will lock up my gun(s) in my car or truck	81.9%	(79.1%, 84.6%)	79.8%	(76.9%, 82.7%)	83.9%	(79.2%, 88.6%)	2.10	0.148
I will secure my gun(s) to prevent loss and theft	94.0%	(91.6%, 96.4%)	95.5%	(94.0%, 96.9%)	92.5%	(88.0%, 97.1%)	1.48	0.224
I will secure my gun(s) to prevent an unintentional injury to a child	93.8%	(91.4%, 96.3%)	94.7%	(92.8%, 96.5%)	93.0%	(88.4%, 97.6%)	0.44	0.507
I will secure my gun(s) to prevent suicide	85.4%	(82.7%, 88.1%)	84.5%	(81.6%, 87.4%)	86.3%	(81.7%, 91.0%)	0.42	0.517
I will not lock up my gun(s) when I'm at home	15.8%	(13.8%, 17.9%)	15.5%	(12.7%, 18.2%)	16.2%	(13.2%, 19.3%)	0.14	0.707

Campaign Outcomes	Total N = 2,395		Media After Ad-Related Beliefs N = 1,211		Media Before Ad-Related Beliefs N = 1,184		F-test	
	Mean	CI	Mean	CI	Mean	CI	F-stat	P-value
I will not worry about my gun(s) being stolen	25.2%	(22.7%, 27.8%)	25.5%	(22.2%, 28.9%)	24.9%	(21.2%, 28.7%)	0.06	0.815
I will store my gun(s) however I want	32.3%	(29.7%, 34.9%)	36.5%	(32.9%, 40.0%)	28.1%	(24.5%, 31.8%)	10.19	0.001
Firearm Storage Behavior								
Practices safe gun storage	15.1%	(13.1%, 17.0%)	14.4%	(11.7%, 17.0%)	15.8%	(12.9%, 18.7%)	0.51	0.473
Practices semi-safe gun storage	21.2%	(19.0%, 23.5%)	20.2%	(17.3%, 23.2%)	22.2%	(18.9%, 25.6%)	0.78	0.378

¹ Only in wave 1. Media after ad-related beliefs (N=707); Media before ad-related beliefs (N=697).

² Only in wave 2. Media after ad-related beliefs (N=504); Media before ad-related beliefs (N=487).

A similar trend is true among those who are aware of at least one ad compared to those who are not as 9 ad-related beliefs moved in the desired direction. However, four ad-related beliefs changed in the undesired direction significantly: “Locking up my gun is only important if there are children around”; “Securing my gun in a safe puts me at a greater risk of harm”; “Securing my gun won’t reduce the risk of suicide”; and “My gun is my responsibility” (Table #).

Table 21. Campaign Outcomes by Awareness of at Least One NC S.A.F.E. Ad - Weighted

Campaign Outcomes	Total N=2,393		Not Aware of at Least one Ad N=934		Aware of at Least one Ad N=1,459		F-test	
	Mean	CI	Mean	CI	Mean	CI	F-stat	P-value
Ad-Related Beliefs								
Locking up my gun can reduce the risk of suicide	75.2%	(72.2%, 78.1%)	68.8%	(63.3%, 74.2%)	79.7%	(76.8%, 82.5%)	12.22	0.001
Locking up my gun with a gun lock/case/safe can reduce the risk of suicide	75.2%	(72.2%, 78.2%)	68.0%	(62.5%, 73.5%)	80.3%	(77.4%, 83.2%)	15.21	0.000
In NC, more than half of gun deaths are suicides	45.1%	(42.2%, 48.1%)	35.7%	(31.2%, 40.2%)	51.7%	(48.1%, 55.3%)	29.96	0.000
If I keep my gun in my car, I should keep it out of sight and lock my car doors	92.7%	(90.7%, 94.8%)	92.5%	(88.1%, 96.9%)	92.9%	(91.2%, 94.6%)	0.03	0.872
Every year, thousands of people lose their guns	63.3%	(60.2%, 66.4%)	51.0%	(46.0%, 56.1%)	71.9%	(68.4%, 75.3%)	45.39	0.000
Guns are often stolen from parked cars and trucks	83.5%	(81.0%, 86.0%)	78.7%	(73.9%, 83.4%)	86.9%	(84.5%, 89.3%)	9.32	0.002

Campaign Outcomes	Total N=2,393		Not Aware of at Least one Ad N=934		Aware of at Least one Ad N=1,459		F-test	
	Mean	CI	Mean	CI	Mean	CI	F-stat	P-value
Securing my gun can prevent an accident	93.3%	(90.8%, 95.7%)	92.1%	(86.7%, 97.5%)	94.1%	(92.5%, 95.6%)	0.46	0.498
An accident could occur if a child finds a gun	95.2%	(92.7%, 97.6%)	95.1%	(89.7%, 100.4%)	95.3%	(93.5%, 97.0%)	0.00	0.946
An accident could occur if someone steals a gun	94.3%	(92.3%, 96.3%)	93.0%	(88.6%, 97.4%)	95.2%	(93.8%, 96.5%)	0.83	0.363
It only takes a moment to secure my gun effectively	93.3%	(91.3%, 95.4%)	90.6%	(86.2%, 95.1%)	95.2%	(93.8%, 96.6%)	3.75	0.053
It's more important than ever to keep my gun secure	90.8%	(88.3%, 93.3%)	88.0%	(82.6%, 93.4%)	92.8%	(91.1%, 94.4%)	2.79	0.095
Gun deaths among children and youth are on the rise	77.2%	(74.3%, 80.0%)	69.2%	(64.4%, 74.1%)	82.7%	(79.6%, 85.8%)	20.99	0.000
Gun thefts are on the rise, especially from cars	76.5%	(73.5%, 79.5%)	67.2%	(61.7%, 72.6%)	83.1%	(80.1%, 86.0%)	25.42	0.000
When I keep my guns safe, I am keeping my kids safe	91.3%	(88.8%, 93.8%)	89.1%	(83.7%, 94.5%)	92.9%	(91.1%, 94.6%)	1.68	0.196
When I keep my guns safe, I am keeping my community safe	88.3%	(85.6%, 90.9%)	86.7%	(81.3%, 92.1%)	89.4%	(87.1%, 91.6%)	0.80	0.370
More than 100 children and youth die by gun violence in NC every year	65.1%	(62.0%, 68.2%)	53.4%	(48.2%, 58.6%)	73.3%	(69.9%, 76.7%)	40.17	0.000
Locking up my gun can be dangerous if I can't get to it fast enough	47.0%	(44.1%, 49.8%)	46.7%	(42.2%, 51.2%)	47.1%	(43.5%, 50.8%)	0.02	0.882
Locking up my gun is only important if there are children around	25.5%	(23.1%, 27.9%)	21.4%	(17.8%, 25.0%)	28.4%	(25.3%, 31.5%)	8.56	0.0044
Storing my gun in a safe puts me at a greater risk of harm	24.6%	(22.3%, 27.0%)	20.8%	(17.3%, 24.3%)	27.3%	(24.2%, 30.4%)	7.69	0.006
Securing my gun won't reduce the risk of suicide¹	26.9%	(24.0%, 29.8%)	22.9%	(18.8%, 27.0%)	30.2%	(26.3%, 34.2%)	6.30	0.012
Securing my gun won't reduce the risk of gun accidents ¹	17.8%	(15.3%, 20.3%)	15.8%	(12.1%, 19.4%)	19.5%	(16.1%, 22.9%)	2.17	0.141
An unlocked gun is a tragedy waiting to happen	74.6%	(71.6%, 77.5%)	67.7%	(62.3%, 73.2%)	79.4%	(76.5%, 82.2%)	13.97	0.000
My gun is my responsibility	97.3%	(96.6%, 98.1%)	98.3%	(97.2%, 99.3%)	96.7%	(95.6%, 97.8%)	4.31	0.038
I should know how to handle my gun/safely store it to not make a rookie mistake	94.8%	(92.5%, 97.2%)	92.8%	(87.3%, 98.2%)	96.3%	(95.2%, 97.4%)	1.61	0.204
Owning a gun to protect my family can backfire if I don't store it safely	88.3%	(85.7%, 90.9%)	85.0%	(79.6%, 90.5%)	90.5%	(88.5%, 92.6%)	3.47	0.063

	Total N=2,393		Not Aware of at Least one Ad N=934		Aware of at Least one Ad N=1,459		F-test	
	Mean	CI	Mean	CI	Mean	CI	F-stat	P-value
Campaign Outcomes								
My family is counting on me to protect them so I should lock up my gun safely	80.7%	(77.8%, 83.6%)	74.6%	(69.0%, 80.2%)	85.0%	(82.4%, 87.5%)	11.06	0.001
I should have a conversation with my children about what to do around guns ²	92.5%	(88.7%, 96.3%)	88.1%	(78.5%, 97.7%)	94.9%	(93.1%, 96.8%)	1.86	0.173
Safe gun storage should be part of my routine ²	93.5%	(89.8%, 97.2%)	90.9%	(81.5%, 100.3%)	95.0%	(93.1%, 97.0%)	0.73	0.395
Safe Gun Storage Knowledge								
Correctly Identified Safe Gun Storage	52.8%	(49.7%, 55.8%)	50.5%	(45.4%, 55.6%)	54.4%	(50.7%, 58.0%)	1.52	0.217
Correctly Identified Semi-Safe Gun Storage	61.8%	(58.6%, 64.9%)	58.7%	(53.4%, 64.0%)	63.9%	(60.3%, 67.6%)	2.58	0.108
Participants' correct knowledge of NC gun laws	66.7%	(63.7%, 69.7%)	58.1%	(52.9%, 63.3%)	72.7%	(69.6%, 75.9%)	22.98	0.000
What does safe and secure gun storage mean to you?								
Locked in a safe/gun box/cable lock	88.5%	(85.9%, 91.2%)	86.1%	(80.5%, 91.7%)	90.2%	(88.2%, 92.2%)	1.80	0.1780
Unloaded	65.0%	(61.8%, 68.1%)	62.3%	(57.0%, 67.7%)	66.8%	(63.1%, 70.4%)	1.82	0.178
Separated from ammunition	66.9%	(63.9%, 70.0%)	63.8%	(58.5%, 69.2%)	69.1%	(65.6%, 72.6%)	2.67	0.102
Loaded	22.8%	(20.4%, 25.2%)	19.6%	(15.9%, 23.3%)	25.0%	(22.0%, 28.1%)	4.90	0.027
Unlocked	18.6%	(16.3%, 20.8%)	12.3%	(9.3%, 15.2%)	23.0%	(19.9%, 26.0%)	23.77	0.000
Hidden	75.8%	(73.0%, 78.7%)	70.7%	(65.4%, 76.1%)	79.4%	(76.5%, 82.3%)	7.94	0.005
Firearm Storage Intentions								
I will lock up my gun(s) in my home	86.6%	(83.9%, 89.3%)	82.2%	(76.6%, 87.7%)	89.7%	(87.4%, 92.0%)	6.13	0.013
I will lock up my gun(s) in my car or truck	81.9%	(79.1%, 84.6%)	77.5%	(72.0%, 83.0%)	84.9%	(82.6%, 87.3%)	5.93	0.015
I will secure my gun(s) to prevent loss and theft	94.0%	(91.7%, 96.4%)	91.8%	(86.4%, 97.2%)	95.6%	(94.3%, 96.9%)	1.81	0.178
I will secure my gun(s) to prevent an unintentional injury to a child	93.8%	(91.4%, 96.3%)	90.5%	(85.0%, 96.1%)	96.2%	(95.0%, 97.4%)	3.81	0.051
I will secure my gun(s) to prevent suicide	85.4%	(82.7%, 88.1%)	78.8%	(73.4%, 84.3%)	90.0%	(87.9%, 92.2%)	14.29	0.000

Campaign Outcomes	Total N=2,393		Not Aware of at Least one Ad N=934		Aware of at Least one Ad N=1,459		F-test	
	Mean	CI	Mean	CI	Mean	CI	F-stat	P-value
I will not lock up my gun(s) when I'm at home	15.8%	(13.8%, 17.9%)	14.8%	(11.7%, 18.0%)	16.5%	(13.9%, 19.2%)	0.65	0.419
I will not worry about my gun(s) being stolen	25.2%	(22.7%, 27.8%)	21.4%	(17.8%, 25.0%)	27.9%	(24.6%, 31.3%)	6.91	0.009
I will store my gun(s) however I want	32.3%	(29.7%, 34.9%)	30.9%	(26.6%, 35.1%)	33.4%	(30.1%, 36.6%)	0.83	0.362
Firearm Storage Behavior								
Practices safe gun storage	15.1%	(13.1%, 17.0%)	14.9%	(12.0%, 17.9%)	15.2%	(12.7%, 17.7%)	0.02	0.900
Practices semi-safe gun storage	21.2%	(19.0%, 23.5%)	22.0%	(18.5%, 25.6%)	20.7%	(17.9%, 23.5%)	0.35	0.553

¹ Only in Wave 1. Not aware of at least one ad (N = 611); Aware of at least one ad (N = 791).

² Only in Wave 2. Not aware of at least one ad (N = 323); Aware of at least one ad (N = 668).

Agreement with five ad-related beliefs increased significantly from Wave 1 to Wave 2. These beliefs include “Locking up my gun can reduce the risk of suicide,” “In NC, more than half of gun deaths are suicides,” “More than 100 children and youth die by gun violence in NC every year,” “An unlocked gun is a tragedy waiting to happen,” and “My gun is my responsibility” (Table 22).

Table 22. Campaign Outcomes by Wave - Weighted

Campaign Outcomes	Total N = 2,395		Wave 1 N = 1,404		Wave 2 N = 991		F-test	
	Mean	CI	Mean	CI	Mean	CI	F-stat	P-value
Ad-Related Beliefs								
Locking up my gun can reduce the risk of suicide	75.2%	(72.2%, 78.1%)	71.3%	(68.3%, 74.4%)	79.0%	(74.5%, 83.5%)	9.54	0.002
Locking up my gun with a gun lock/case/safe can reduce the risk of suicide	75.2%	(72.2%, 78.2%)	73.4%	(70.4%, 76.4%)	77.0%	(72.4%, 81.7%)	1.96	0.162
In NC, more than half of gun deaths are suicides	45.1%	(42.2%, 48.1%)	41.4%	(38.3%, 44.5%)	48.9%	(44.2%, 53.5%)	7.84	0.005
If I keep my gun in my car, I should keep it out of sight and lock my car doors	92.7%	(90.6%, 94.8%)	93.0%	(91.4%, 94.6%)	92.4%	(88.5%, 96.3%)	0.09	0.769
Every year, thousands of people lose their guns	63.3%	(60.2%, 66.4%)	61.7%	(58.6%, 64.9%)	64.8%	(60.0%, 69.6%)	1.32	0.250
Guns are often stolen from parked cars and trucks	83.5%	(81.0%, 86.0%)	82.3%	(79.8%, 84.7%)	84.8%	(80.5%, 89.1%)	1.02	0.313

Campaign Outcomes	Total N = 2,395		Wave 1 N = 1,404		Wave 2 N = 991		F-test	
	Mean	CI	Mean	CI	Mean	CI	F-stat	P-value
Securing my gun can prevent an accident	93.2%	(90.8%, 95.7%)	92.2%	(90.2%, 94.1%)	94.3%	(90.5%, 98.1%)	1.42	0.234
An accident could occur if a child finds a gun	95.2%	(92.7%, 97.6%)	95.8%	(94.3%, 97.2%)	94.6%	(90.7%, 98.5%)	0.43	0.510
An accident could occur if someone steals a gun	94.3%	(92.3%, 96.3%)	94.4%	(92.9%, 95.9%)	94.2%	(90.4%, 97.9%)	0.01	0.912
It only takes a moment to secure my gun effectively	93.3%	(91.3%, 95.4%)	92.7%	(91.0%, 94.4%)	93.9%	(90.1%, 97.7%)	0.34	0.560
It's more important than ever to keep my gun secure	90.8%	(88.3%, 93.3%)	89.2%	(87.0%, 91.3%)	92.4%	(88.6%, 96.2%)	3.08	0.080
Gun deaths among children and youth are on the rise	77.1%	(74.3%, 80.0%)	77.0%	(74.3%, 79.8%)	77.3%	(72.4%, 82.1%)	0.01	0.937
Gun thefts are on the rise, especially from cars	76.5%	(73.5%, 79.5%)	75.1%	(72.2%, 78.0%)	77.9%	(73.3%, 82.6%)	1.29	0.256
When I keep my guns safe, I am keeping my kids safe	91.3%	(88.8%, 93.8%)	90.3%	(88.3%, 92.4%)	92.3%	(88.4%, 96.1%)	1.07	0.302
When I keep my guns safe, I am keeping my community safe	88.3%	(85.6%, 90.9%)	86.3%	(83.9%, 88.8%)	90.2%	(86.2%, 94.2%)	3.51	0.061
More than 100 children and youth die by gun violence in NC every year	65.1%	(62.0%, 68.2%)	62.0%	(58.9%, 65.2%)	68.2%	(63.4%, 73.1%)	5.23	0.022
Locking up my gun can be dangerous if I can't get to it fast enough	47.0%	(44.1%, 49.8%)	47.7%	(44.5%, 50.9%)	46.3%	(41.7%, 50.8%)	0.25	0.616
Locking up my gun is only important if there are children around	25.5%	(23.1%, 27.9%)	25.0%	(22.2%, 27.8%)	26.0%	(22.3%, 29.6%)	0.18	0.674
Storing my gun in a safe puts me at a greater risk of harm	24.6%	(22.3%, 27.0%)	23.6%	(20.7%, 26.5%)	25.7%	(22.0%, 29.4%)	0.76	0.383
Securing my gun won't reduce the risk of suicide ¹	26.9%	(24.0%, 29.8%)	26.9%	(24.0%, 29.8%)	.	.	.	.
Securing my gun won't reduce the risk of gun accidents	17.8%	(15.3%, 20.3%)	17.8%	(15.3%, 20.3%)	.	.	.	.
An unlocked gun is a tragedy waiting to happen	74.6%	(71.6%, 77.5%)	71.7%	(68.6%, 74.7%)	77.4%	(73.0%, 81.9%)	5.47	0.019
My gun is my responsibility	97.3%	(96.6%, 98.1%)	96.4%	(95.2%, 97.6%)	98.3%	(97.4%, 99.2%)	6.18	0.013
I should know how to handle my gun/safely store it to not make a rookie mistake	94.8%	(92.5%, 97.2%)	94.4%	(92.7%, 96.1%)	95.3%	(91.6%, 99.0%)	0.29	0.591
Owning a gun to protect my family can backfire if I don't store it safely	88.3%	(85.6%, 90.9%)	86.5%	(84.1%, 89.0%)	90.0%	(86.0%, 93.9%)	2.82	0.093
My family is counting on me to protect them so I should lock up my gun safely	80.7%	(77.8%, 83.6%)	79.5%	(76.7%, 82.2%)	81.9%	(77.4%, 86.4%)	1.03	0.310

Campaign Outcomes	Total N = 2,395		Wave 1 N = 1,404		Wave 2 N = 991		F-test	
	Mean	CI	Mean	CI	Mean	CI	F-stat	P-value
I should have a conversation with my children about what to do around guns2	92.5%	(88.7%, 96.3%)	.	.	92.5%	(88.7%, 96.3%)	.	.
Safe gun storage should be part of my routine2	93.5%	(89.8%, 97.2%)	.	.	93.5%	(89.8%, 97.2%)	.	.
Safe Gun Storage Knowledge								
Correctly identified safe gun storage	52.7%	(49.7%, 55.8%)	53.8%	(50.6%, 56.9%)	51.7%	(47.1%, 56.4%)	0.57	0.449
Correctly identified semi-safe gun storage	61.7%	(58.6%, 64.8%)	63.5%	(60.4%, 66.6%)	59.9%	(55.1%, 64.7%)	1.79	0.181
Participants' correct knowledge of NC gun laws	66.7%	(63.7%, 69.7%)	66.9%	(63.9%, 70.0%)	66.4%	(61.8%, 71.0%)	0.04	0.841
What does Safe and Secure Gun Storage Mean to You?								
Locked in a safe/gun box/cable lock	88.5%	(85.9%, 91.2%)	88.1%	(85.8%, 90.4%)	88.9%	(84.8%, 93.0%)	0.15	0.700
Unloaded	64.9%	(61.8%, 68.1%)	67.5%	(64.5%, 70.6%)	62.4%	(57.5%, 67.2%)	3.70	0.055
Separated from ammunition	66.9%	(63.8%, 70.0%)	67.6%	(64.6%, 70.7%)	66.2%	(61.4%, 71.0%)	0.29	0.590
Loaded	22.8%	(20.4%, 25.2%)	20.6%	(18.0%, 23.2%)	25.0%	(21.1%, 28.9%)	3.57	0.090
Unlocked	18.6%	(16.3%, 20.8%)	16.5%	(13.9%, 19.0%)	20.6%	(17.1%, 24.1%)	3.70	0.054
Hidden	75.8%	(73.0%, 78.7%)	76.6%	(73.8%, 79.4%)	75.1%	(70.6%, 79.6%)	0.39	0.531
Firearm Storage Intentions								
I will lock up my gun(s) in my home	86.6%	(83.9%, 89.3%)	85.5%	(82.9%, 88.0%)	87.7%	(83.5%, 91.9%)	1.09	0.297
I will lock up my gun(s) in my car or truck	81.9%	(79.1%, 84.6%)	82.0%	(79.5%, 84.4%)	81.8%	(77.4%, 86.1%)	0.01	0.925
I will secure my gun(s) to prevent loss and theft	94.0%	(91.6%, 96.4%)	92.8%	(90.9%, 94.7%)	95.2%	(91.6%, 98.9%)	1.97	0.161
I will secure my gun(s) to prevent an unintentional injury to a child	93.8%	(91.4%, 96.3%)	93.6%	(91.8%, 95.4%)	94.1%	(90.3%, 98.0%)	0.10	0.749
I will secure my gun(s) to prevent suicide	85.4%	(82.7%, 88.1%)	83.5%	(80.9%, 86.0%)	87.3%	(83.1%, 91.6%)	3.04	0.082
I will not lock up my gun(s) when I'm at home	15.8%	(13.8%, 17.9%)	17.1%	(14.5%, 19.6%)	14.6%	(11.6%, 17.6%)	1.66	0.198
I will not worry about my gun(s) being stolen	25.2%	(22.7%, 27.8%)	24.0%	(21.3%, 26.8%)	26.5%	(22.5%, 30.4%)	1.05	0.306
I will store my gun(s) however I want	32.3%	(29.7%, 34.9%)	32.3%	(29.3%, 35.3%)	32.4%	(28.4%, 36.3%)	0.00	0.983

Campaign Outcomes	Total N = 2,395		Wave 1 N = 1,404		Wave 2 N = 991		F-test	
	Mean	CI	Mean	CI	Mean	CI	F-stat	P-value
Firearm Storage Behavior								
Practices safe gun storage	15.1%	(13.1%, 17.0%)	15.3%	(13.1%, 17.5%)	14.9%	(12.0%, 17.7%)	0.07	0.796
Practices semi-safe gun storage	21.2%	(19.0%, 23.5%)	22.3%	(19.7%, 24.8%)	20.2%	(17.0%, 23.4%)	1.22	0.269

¹ Only in Wave 1. Not aware of at least one ad (N = 611); Aware of at least one ad (N = 791).

² Only in Wave 2. Not aware of at least one ad (N = 323); Aware of at least one ad (N = 668).

There are no significant differences in self-efficacy across efficacy groups, but there are differences in self-efficacy based on awareness of any ad. Among participants who have seen at least one ad, 92.5% agree that they know how to lock up their gun(s) in their car or truck (F = 5.40, p = 0.020), 93.4% agree that they have what they need to lock up their gun in their home (F = 8.19, p = 0.004), 71.8% agree that thieves cannot access their gun(s) when they are locked up in their home/car/truck (F = 19.88, p = 0.000), and 89.1% agree that children cannot access their gun(s) when they are locked up in their home/car/truck (F = 6.82, p = 0.009) compared to those who are not aware of any ads. While low, there is a significant increase in agreement among those who have seen at least one ad compared to those who are not aware of at least one ad that they would never adjust to using a safe, gun box, or lock for gun storage (15.8%, F = 13.79, p = 0.002) and that they don't want to think about gun storage (11.9%, F = 11.16, 0.001).

Storage intent by efficacy group was only significantly different in the desired direction for the attitude "I will store my gun(s) however I want" as agreement for the efficacy group was 36.5% while the control group was only 28.1% (F = 10.19, p = 0.001). When looking at storage intent by ad awareness, participants who are aware of at least one ad have significantly higher agreement for the following intents: "I will lock up my gun(s) in my home" (89.7%, F = 6.13, p = 0.013); "I will lock up my gun(s) in my car or truck (84.9%, F = 5.93, p=0.015); and "I will secure my gun(s) to prevent suicide" (90.0%, F = 14.29, p = 0.000). However, agreement is greater with the statement that they will not worry about their gun(s) being stolen at 27.9% among participants who are aware of at least one ad compared to 21.4% among participants who were not aware of any ads (F = 6.91, p = 0.009).

Model Results

Model 1: Predictors of Campaign Awareness

The covariates selected, along with the baseline demographic variables, to form the best fit model to predict ad awareness include military service, children in the household, employment status, marital status, firearm safety training, media use frequency, gun storage in the garage, and gun storage in the car. Participants who are aged 35-49 (OR = 0.63, p = 0.035), 50-64 (OR

= 0.36, p = 0.000), 65+ (OR = 0.35, p = 0.000); have political beliefs other than liberal, moderate, or conservative (OR = 0.34, p = 0.022); have an advanced degree (OR = 0.52, p = 0.008); and make more than \$80k (OR = 0.54, p = 0.005) are significantly less likely to be aware of at least one NC S.A.F.E ad. Participants in Wave 2 (OR = 1.55, p = 0.000); those who are Black NH (OR = 1.78, p = 0.002); those with a child in their household (OR = 1.41, p = 0.026); those who have taken a firearm safety training (OR = 1.71, p = 0.000); and have a high media use (OR = 1.47, p = 0.023) are more likely to be aware of at least one NC S.A.F.E ad (Table 23).

Table 23. Model 1 Results: Predictors of Campaign Awareness - Weighted

Variables	OR	Lower CI	Upper CI	P-value
Age (categorical)	.	.	.	.
18–24	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
25–34	0.66	0.42	1.03	0.068
35–49	0.63	0.41	0.97	0.035
50–64	0.36	0.23	0.56	0.000
65+	0.35	0.21	0.58	0.000
Sex	.	.	.	.
Female	0.94	0.71	1.23	0.644
Male	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Race/Ethnicity	.	.	.	.
Hispanic	1.24	0.71	2.16	0.454
Black NH	1.78	1.23	2.59	0.002
White NH	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Multiracial or another race NH	1.48	0.87	2.50	0.147
Political Beliefs	.	.	.	.
Liberal	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Moderate	1.11	0.78	1.59	0.555
Conservative	0.79	0.56	1.11	0.174
Other	0.34	0.13	0.86	0.022
Rurality	.	.	.	.
Urban	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Rural	0.69	0.45	1.08	0.106
Education	.	.	.	.
Less than high school degree	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Some college	0.92	0.63	1.34	0.671
Associate's degree	1.10	0.72	1.68	0.650
Bachelor's degree	0.69	0.47	1.01	0.055
Advanced or post-graduate degree	0.52	0.32	0.84	0.008

Variables	OR	Lower CI	Upper CI	P-value
Income	.	.	.	.
Less than \$30k	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
\$30k - under \$50k	0.68	0.46	1.00	0.052
\$50k - under \$80k	0.68	0.44	1.04	0.077
\$80k - \$130k+	0.54	0.36	0.83	0.005
Efficacy Group	.	.	.	.
Media after KABs	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Media before KABs	1.03	0.79	1.33	0.848
Wave	.	.	.	.
Wave 1	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Wave 2	1.55	1.22	1.99	0.000
Military Status	.	.	.	.
Never served in the military	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Currently or previously served in the military	1.04	0.67	1.62	0.846
Children in Household	.	.	.	.
No	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Yes	1.41	1.04	1.90	0.026
Employment Status	.	.	.	.
Employed part time or more	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Does not work	1.07	0.77	1.48	0.683
Marital Status	.	.	.	.
Married	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Else	0.96	0.72	1.29	0.787
Firearms Safety Training	.	.	.	.
Have taken or currently taking training	1.71	1.26	2.30	0.000
Else	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Media Use Frequency	.	.	.	.
Low media use	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Medium media use	1.13	0.85	1.51	0.401
High media use	1.47	1.06	2.06	0.023
[Garage] Where are these guns stored?	1.48	0.89	2.47	0.133
[Car] Where are these guns stored?	1.25	0.87	1.80	0.225

Adj R² = 0.15
AIC = 2531.07

Model 2: Predictors of Safe Gun Storage

The covariates selected, along with the baseline demographic variables, to form the best fit model to predict which demographic and household characteristics best predict safe storage

behavior include military service, children in the household, employment status, marital status, firearm safety training, media use frequency, gun storage in the garage, and gun storage in the car. Participants aged 50–64 (OR = 2.04, p = 0.031), female participants (OR = 1.97, p = 0.000), and participant who have high media use (OR = 1.72, p = 0.008) are twice as likely to store their firearm safely compared to participants aged 18–24, male participants, and participants who have low media use respectively. Participants who live in a rural county (OR = 0.58, p = 0.046), make \$30k–\$50k (OR = 0.59, p = 0.038), store their firearm in the garage (OR = 0.41, p = 0.009) or car (OR = 0.26, p = 0.000) are significantly less likely to store their firearm safely (Table 24).

Table 24. Model 2 Results: Predictors of Safe Gun Storage Behaviors - Weighted

Variables	OR	Lower CI	Upper CI	P-value
Age (categorical)	.	.	.	.
18–24	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
25–34	1.08	0.57	2.04	0.823
35–49	1.53	0.84	2.78	0.162
50–64	2.04	1.07	3.88	0.031
65+	1.73	0.83	3.59	0.144
Sex	.	.	.	.
Female	1.98	1.39	2.83	0.000
Male	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Race/Ethnicity	.	.	.	.
Hispanic	1.18	0.60	2.32	0.640
Black NH	0.86	0.48	1.54	0.600
White NH	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Multiracial or another race NH	0.90	0.43	1.89	0.777
Political Beliefs	.	.	.	.
Liberal	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Moderate	0.96	0.60	1.53	0.863
Conservative	0.72	0.46	1.14	0.166
Other	0.64	0.20	1.99	0.437
Rurality	.	.	.	.
Urban	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Rural	0.58	0.34	0.99	0.046

Variables	OR	Lower CI	Upper CI	P-value
Education	.	.	.	.
Less than high school degree	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Some college	0.77	0.49	1.21	0.260
Associate's degree	1.25	0.77	2.03	0.367
Bachelor's degree	1.12	0.68	1.85	0.664
Advanced or post-graduate degree	0.87	0.45	1.69	0.677
Income	.	.	.	.
Less than \$30k	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
\$30k - under \$50k	0.59	0.36	0.97	0.038
\$50k - under \$80k	0.83	0.49	1.40	0.482
\$80k - \$130k+	0.89	0.51	1.54	0.668
Efficacy Group	.	.	.	.
Media after KABs	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Media before KABs	1.03	0.74	1.44	0.853
Wave	.	.	.	.
Wave 1	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Wave 2	0.94	0.70	1.25	0.665
Aware of at least one NC S.A.F.E. Ad	.	.	.	.
No	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Yes	0.88	0.63	1.23	0.452
Military Status	.	.	.	.
Never served in the military	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Currently or previously served in the military	1.01	0.51	1.98	0.983
Children in Household	.	.	.	.
No	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Yes	1.43	0.96	2.13	0.075
Employment Status	.	.	.	.
Employed part time or more	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Does not work	0.79	0.53	1.19	0.268
Marital Status	.	.	.	.
Married	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Else	0.97	0.66	1.42	0.865
Firearms Safety Training	.	.	.	.
Have taken or currently taking training	1.04	0.72	1.51	0.816
Else	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref

Variables	OR	Lower CI	Upper CI	P-value
Media Use Frequency	.	.	.	.
Low media use	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Medium media use	1.27	0.86	1.88	0.223
High media use	1.72	1.15	2.58	0.008
[Garage] Where are these guns stored?	0.41	0.21	0.80	0.009
[Car] Where are these guns stored?	0.26	0.15	0.45	0.000

Adj R² = 0.036
AIC = 1721.22

Model 3: Campaign Awareness and Campaign-Outcomes

When controlling for demographic and household characteristics, awareness of at least one NC S.A.F.E. ad is positively and significantly associated with 11 ad-related beliefs, 1 safe gun storage beliefs, 2 gun storage behaviors, and correct knowledge of NC gun laws (Table 25). Of the ad-related beliefs, agreement that “Storing my gun in a safe puts me at a greater risk of harm,” “Securing my gun won’t reduce the risk of suicide,” and “My gun in my responsibility” are not associated with ad awareness in the desired direction. The belief that safe and secure gun storage means storing it separately from ammunition increased positively and significantly as well as the intentions that they will lock up they gun(s) in the car or truck, and will secure their gun(s) to prevent suicide. However, the belief that “unlocked” means safe and secure gun storage, and the intention that they will not lock up their gun(s) when they are at home are also positively and significantly associated with ad awareness.

Table 25. Model 3 Results: Relationship Between Campaign Awareness and Campaign-Outcomes – Weighted

Campaign Outcomes	OR	Lower CI	Upper CI	P-value
Ad-Related Beliefs				
Locking up my gun can reduce the risk of suicide	1.43	1.05	1.93	0.022
Locking up my gun with a gun lock/case/safe can reduce the risk of suicide	1.75	1.27	2.42	0.001
In NC, more than half of gun deaths are suicides	1.83	1.40	2.41	0.000
If I keep my gun in my car, I should keep it out of sight and lock my car doors	0.81	0.49	1.32	0.398
Every year, thousands of people lose their guns	2.18	1.66	2.86	0.000
Guns are often stolen from parked cars and trucks	1.60	1.11	2.32	0.013
Securing my gun can prevent an accident	1.11	0.61	2.04	0.732
An accident could occur if a child finds a gun	0.57	0.27	1.21	0.144
An accident could occur if someone steals a gun	0.78	0.44	1.38	0.387
It only takes a moment to secure my gun effectively	1.68	0.95	2.96	0.072
It’s more important than ever to keep my gun secure	1.05	0.68	1.62	0.839

Campaign Outcomes	OR	Lower CI	Upper CI	P-value
Gun deaths among children and youth are on the rise	2.02	1.46	2.78	0.000
Gun thefts are on the rise, especially from cars	1.94	1.41	2.67	0.000
When I keep my guns safe, I am keeping my kids safe	1.20	0.76	1.89	0.438
When I keep my guns safe, I am keeping my community safe	0.85	0.55	1.30	0.449
More than 100 children and youth die by gun violence in NC every year	2.06	1.55	2.74	0.000
Locking up my gun can be dangerous if I can't get to it fast enough	0.97	0.74	1.28	0.830
Locking up my gun is only important if there are children around	1.25	0.93	1.69	0.135
Storing my gun in a safe puts me at a greater risk of harm	1.56	1.13	2.17	0.007
Securing my gun won't reduce the risk of suicide¹	1.50	1.02	2.19	0.038
Securing my gun won't reduce the risk of gun accidents ¹	1.27	0.82	1.98	0.290
An unlocked gun is a tragedy waiting to happen	1.45	1.07	1.96	0.015
My gun is my responsibility	0.27	0.10	0.77	0.014
I should know how to handle my gun/safely store it to not make a rookie mistake	1.13	0.64	2.01	0.676
Owning a gun to protect my family can backfire if I don't store it safely	1.15	0.73	1.80	0.544
My family is counting on me to protect them so I should lock up my gun safely	1.75	1.22	2.49	0.002
I should have a conversation with my children about what to do around guns²	2.71	1.17	6.25	0.020
Safe gun storage should be part of my routine ²	1.27	0.52	3.06	0.601
Safe Gun Storage Knowledge				
Correctly Identified Safe Gun Storage	1.16	0.90	1.51	0.259
Correctly Identified Semi-Safe Gun Storage	1.19	0.91	1.57	0.200
Participants' Correct Knowledge of NC Gun Laws	2.21	1.68	2.92	0.000
What does safe and secure gun storage mean to you?				
Locked in a safe/gun box/cable lock	0.92	0.59	1.42	0.694
Unloaded	1.25	0.94	1.65	0.122
Separated from ammunition	1.33	1.00	1.76	0.049
Loaded	1.31	0.95	1.79	0.098
Unlocked	2.23	1.51	3.30	0.000
Hidden	1.22	0.90	1.66	0.199
Firearm Storage Intentions				
I will lock up my gun(s) in my home	1.48	0.99	2.22	0.056
I will lock up my gun(s) in my car or truck	1.66	1.22	2.27	0.001
I will secure my gun(s) to prevent loss and theft	1.56	0.92	2.66	0.102
I will secure my gun(s) to prevent an unintentional injury to a child	1.43	0.76	2.66	0.265
I will secure my gun(s) to prevent suicide	1.91	1.31	2.79	0.001
I will not lock up my gun(s) when I'm at home	1.49	1.02	2.18	0.041

Campaign Outcomes	OR	Lower CI	Upper CI	P-value
I will not worry about my gun(s) being stolen	1.30	0.97	1.75	0.082
I will store my gun(s) however I want	1.08	0.81	1.43	0.596
Firearm Storage Behavior				
Practices safe gun storage	0.88	0.62	1.25	0.481
Practices semi-safe gun storage	0.78	0.57	1.06	0.114

Model 4: Safe Gun Storage Knowledge and Safe Gun Storage Behaviors

There is a strong positive association between safe and semi-safe gun storage knowledge and safe and semi-safe gun storage behavior. Participants with correct safe gun storage knowledge are more than 7 times as likely to store their gun safely, and participants with correct semi-safe gun storage knowledge are more than 8 times as likely to store their gun safely (Table 26).

Table 26. Model 4.A Results: Relationship Between Correct Safe and Semi-Safe Gun Storage Knowledge, and Safe Gun Storage Behavior - Weighted

Variables	OR	Lower CI	Upper CI	P-value
Participants who know correct safe gun storage (unloaded, locked, separate from ammo)	7.47	5.05	11.05	0.000
Participants who know correct semi-safe gun (unloaded, locked, with ammunition)	8.14	5.18	12.80	0.000

Table 27. Model 4.B Results: Relationship Between Correct Safe and Semi-Safe Gun Storage Knowledge, and Semi-Safe Gun Storage Behavior - Weighted

Variables	OR	Lower CI	Upper CI	P-value
Participants who know correct safe gun storage (unloaded, locked, separate from ammo)	5.15	3.73	7.10	0.000
Participants who know correct semi-safe gun (unloaded, locked, with ammunition)	6.84	4.64	10.08	0.000

Model 5: DiD Ad Awareness and Campaign Outcomes

Finally, when controlling for demographic and household characteristics and trends over time, participants who saw the media before the ad-related questions are nearly 24 times more likely to agree with the intention to secure their gun(s) to prevent unintentional injury to a child at Wave 2 compared to those who saw the media after the ad-related questions at Wave 1. There are no other significant results to report.

Table 28. Model 5 Results: Relationship Between Ad Awareness and Changes in Campaign Outcomes Beliefs Between Waves 1 and 2 - Weighted

Campaign Outcomes	Efficacy Group by Wave OR	Lower CI	Upper CI	P-value
Ad-Related Beliefs				
Locking up my gun can reduce the risk of suicide	2.32	0.92	5.86	0.075
Locking up my gun with a gun lock/case/safe can reduce the risk of suicide	2.38	0.89	6.37	0.083
In NC, more than half of gun deaths are suicides	0.61	0.32	1.16	0.131
If I keep my gun in my car, I should keep it out of sight and lock my car doors	0.41	0.06	2.94	0.377
Every year, thousands of people lose their guns	1.08	0.51	2.29	0.844
Guns are often stolen from parked cars and trucks	0.42	0.15	1.20	0.106
Securing my gun can prevent an accident	1.76	0.24	12.78	0.575
An accident could occur if a child finds a gun	0.51	0.05	5.75	0.587
An accident could occur if someone steals a gun	0.59	0.08	4.23	0.598
It only takes a moment to secure my gun effectively	0.38	0.05	2.64	0.324
It's more important than ever to keep my gun secure	0.46	0.10	2.17	0.325
Gun deaths among children and youth are on the rise	0.68	0.27	1.72	0.419
Gun thefts are on the rise, especially from cars	0.56	0.22	1.40	0.215
When I keep my guns safe, I am keeping my kids safe	1.10	0.27	4.39	0.896
When I keep my guns safe, I am keeping my community safe	1.09	0.30	3.97	0.893
More than 100 children and youth die by gun violence in NC every year	0.91	0.44	1.90	0.804
Locking up my gun can be dangerous if I can't get to it fast enough	0.88	0.42	1.86	0.739
Locking up my gun is only important if there are children around	1.29	0.57	2.91	0.537
Storing my gun in a safe puts me at a greater risk of harm	0.74	0.34	1.60	0.440
An unlocked gun is a tragedy waiting to happen	1.09	0.49	2.43	0.829
My gun is my responsibility	0.34	0.00	43.00	0.662
I should know how to handle my gun/safely store it to not make a rookie mistake	0.86	0.13	5.67	0.874
Owning a gun to protect my family can backfire if I don't store it safely	0.62	0.18	2.16	0.450
My family is counting on me to protect them so I should lock up my gun safely	1.62	0.54	4.88	0.388
Safe Gun Storage Knowledge				
Correctly identified safe gun storage	1.19	0.61	2.33	0.613
Correctly identified semi-safe gun storage	1.00	0.49	2.04	0.992
Participants' Correct Knowledge of NC Gun Laws	0.63	0.32	1.24	0.182

Campaign Outcomes	Efficacy Group by Wave OR	Lower CI	Upper CI	P-value
Safe and secure gun storage mean to you?				
Locked in a safe/gun box/cable lock	0.86	0.25	2.98	0.807
Unloaded	0.97	0.44	2.14	0.935
Separated from ammunition	0.82	0.37	1.80	0.624
Loaded	1.75	0.71	4.31	0.225
Unlocked	0.87	0.32	2.34	0.780
Hidden	1.59	0.67	3.81	0.294
Firearm Storage Intentions				
I will lock up my gun(s) in my home	0.39	0.13	1.19	0.096
I will lock up my gun(s) in my car or truck	1.85	0.75	4.53	0.181
I will secure my gun(s) to prevent loss and theft	1.01	0.09	11.14	0.991
I will secure my gun(s) to prevent an unintentional injury to a child	26.05	1.33	509.11	0.032
I will secure my gun(s) to prevent suicide	3.00	0.75	11.98	0.120
I will not lock up my gun(s) when I'm at home	1.64	0.57	4.69	0.356
I will not worry about my gun(s) being stolen	1.62	0.68	3.83	0.275
I will store my gun(s) however I want	1.06	0.50	2.25	0.883
Firearm Storage Behavior				
Practices safe gun storage	0.86	0.41	1.78	0.679
Practices semi-safe gun storage	0.65	0.35	1.20	0.168

Discussion

Educational campaigns represent an innovative approach to reducing firearm-related injury by disseminating information about the importance of safe storage. These campaigns typically seek to raise awareness of safe storage methods and disseminate safe storage devices, and until recently have been funded by, or through, nonprofit organizations. For example, the Ad Council has an ongoing national multimedia campaign called End Family Fire, which uses public safety announcements and true stories to promote safe storage. Everytown's Be Smart campaign operates similarly. One of the longest standing safe storage campaigns is Project ChildSafe, which launched in 1999 and has been funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance through the National Shooting Sports Foundation/APCO Worldwide. More recently, several states have passed legislation or funded programs for firearm safe storage campaigns, including North Carolina, California, Texas, Virginia, and Michigan. In a political climate where federal firearm legislation requiring safe storage is not anticipated, additional states and organizations may choose to shift their focus to this strategy. However, it is critical to understand whether these campaigns are achieving their goals of increasing safe storage, and under what conditions.

NC DPS launched the NC S.A.F.E. media campaign in the summer of 2023 to encourage adult gun owners in North Carolina to store their firearms safely, reduce unauthorized access and thefts of firearms, and reduce incidence of firearm-related injuries. This report summarizes the results from RTI International's comprehensive evaluation of NC S.A.F.E. including a process evaluation, social media listening, and an outcome evaluation conducted from May 2023 (that included retrospective social media listening data) through June 2025.

Process Evaluation Key Findings

We conducted a process evaluation consisting of two rounds of interviews (15 participants per round) with firearm owners in North Carolina in April 2025 and August-September 2025. The purpose of the interviews was to explore beliefs and behaviors around safe firearm storage and obtain feedback on NC S.A.F.E. advertisements.

Firearm Ownership

Characteristics of firearm ownership varied across participants.

1. **Length of time owning a firearm:** Some participants were fairly new to firearm ownership, while others reported owning firearms for more than ten years.
2. **Number of firearms owned:** The number of firearms each participant reported owning varied from one to up to ten or more, with about half reporting being sole owners of the firearms and the other half reporting that one or more of the firearms kept on their property belonged to other members of their household.

Safe Storage Knowledge, Attitudes, & Beliefs

Participants provided different definitions of what “safe and secure” storage meant to them. Many participants shared that safe and secure firearm storage meant that the firearm(s) were locked up in a safe or locked with a key or code.

We asked about behaviors related to safe storage to assess adherence to the three recommended safe storage practices:

- **Locked:** Storing firearm(s) locked in a safe, gun box, or cable box all or most of the time
- **Unloaded:** Storing firearm(s) unloaded² all or most of the time. We defined “unloaded” as a firearm that does not contain ammunition in its firing chamber, magazine, or cylinder. Any removable magazine or cylinder that holds ammunition is removed or empty.
- **Ammunition in a separate, locked location:** Storing ammunition in a separate from the firearm and locked location

Keeping firearms stored in a locked location all or most of the time was endorsed by the most participants, followed by keeping ammunition stored in a separate location (about half of the participants). Fewer participants reported storing ammunition in a separate location. Only five participants reported practicing all three safe storage methods for all of the firearms in their household all of the time.

Most participants said that storing firearms safely is very important. Keeping children and other family members safe was the most common motivator cited for storing firearms safely. For those who did not always follow all three recommendations for safe storage, wanting easy access to their firearm(s) if needed for protection was the most common reason for not doing so. In addition, some participants discussed not implementing the recommended storage methods because they did not have children in the home.

The high cost of safes and not being able to fit large firearms in a safe were cited as barriers or challenges in storing firearms safely. Participants identified several things that would make it easier to implement the recommended safe storage methods: (1) access to more affordable safes, (2) larger safes or access to multiple safes, (3) access to biometric safes, (4) mobile safes to keep firearms locked in car or outside the home, and (5) safes with automatic lights to make loading in the dark easier.

Campaign Materials

Only a few participants said they had heard of NC S.A.F.E. prior to their interview. After viewing and discussing the ads, many participants said they would trust NC S.A.F.E. as the source or messenger for information about firearm safety, but some participants said they didn’t have enough information to make a determination and would want to look at the NC S.A.F.E. website

² In Round 1, participants were asked how they defined “unloaded” if they indicated they stored their firearm(s) unloaded. In Round 2, we defined “unloaded” for participants before asking if they stored their firearm(s) unloaded.

for more information. A few participants said they would prefer to get information from sources such as sheriff/police departments, state troopers, and/or hunter safety classes.

Overall, participants reacted positively to the ads. A few themes emerged across ads:

1. **Diverse opinions:** Reactions to some of the elements in the ads differed across participants. While some participants said they liked an ad for one reason, other participants disliked the ad for that same reason (e.g., child holding a gun in “Doesn’t Backfire”). Similarly, some participants preferred ads that showed the consequence of not storing firearms safely while others preferred ads that showed a solution (e.g., gun safe).
2. **Target audience:** Participants tended to relate more to ads that depicted people in similar life circumstances and depictions of behaviors related to firearms similar to their own (e.g., parents, whether one takes their firearm(s) off their property).
3. **Behavior change:** Even when participants found an ad to be relevant, many said they would not do anything differently as a result of the ad because they said that they were already storing their firearm(s) safely.

Ad Placement

Gun shop, stores that sell guns, websites that sell firearms, shooting ranges, billboards, online (e.g., YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, X, TikTok), TV, cable or streaming services, and in the community (e.g., store windows, lampposts, bus stops, museums) were the most common participant suggestions for ad placement.

Social Media Listening Key Findings

We measured social media engagement with the NC S.A.F.E. campaign from May 2023 through July 2025. We found that law enforcement and leaders in the state government drove the conversation and their posts increased campaign visibility. Given their level of engagement, these are key partners for future campaign delivery.

Campaign messaging that focused on community connection and collaboration, and protecting one’s family from injury resonated with people on social media. These messages generated strong engagement across social media platforms.

Each of the social media platforms (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, X) played different and reinforcing roles in facilitating engagement across North Carolina. Facebook served as a hub for community partnerships, Instagram amplified visual-based storytelling, and X was a fast-moving channel for state leadership updates to the community and media amplification.

Facebook Major Themes

On Facebook, messaging focused on community connection and collaboration, reflecting strong partnerships among police departments, state leaders, and local government organizations. The overall tone was serious yet hopeful, with posts reinforcing the campaign’s central message of promoting public safety and encouraging responsible firearm ownership across North Carolina.

Three major themes emerged across Facebook posts for the duration of the campaign.

1. **Community partnership:** Collaboration between police departments, city governments, local organizations, and the NC S.A.F.E. campaign was evident across many posts. These messages often highlighted community events, firearm lock giveaways, and opportunities for the public to learn more about secure storage. They demonstrated how agencies and organizations are working together to make firearm safety a shared community goal.
2. **Leadership amplification:** Messages from state leaders and local law enforcement agencies amplified NC S.A.F.E.'s visibility and credibility. Their participation reinforced statewide support for firearm safety and served as an example of proactive advocacy.
3. **Empathy and remembrance:** Several posts honored victims of firearm incidents or shared community stories tied to remembrance observances, such as Gun Violence Awareness Month (June). These emotional messages connected safety advocacy to real-life impact, helping audiences engage on a more personal level.

Instagram Major Themes

On Instagram, content emphasized visual storytelling and local engagement, featuring officers, healthcare professionals, and community partners sharing firearm safety messages through photos and short videos. The overall tone was informative and approachable, using relatable visuals and concise messaging to promote prevention, family safety, and community involvement in firearm safety practices.

Three major themes emerged across Instagram posts for the duration of the campaign.

1. **Community storytelling:** Officer spotlights, short videos, and photo posts emphasized real people promoting safe storage, helping translate NC S.A.F.E.'s mission into relatable, shareable visuals.
2. **Health and family prevention:** Healthcare partners, including Duke Health, framed firearm safety as part of family and pediatric well-being, reinforcing prevention as a public-health issue.
3. **Community partnership:** Collaboration between police departments, healthcare organizations, and community partners was a recurring theme on Instagram, reinforcing the same types of messages highlighted on Facebook. Posts frequently showcased officers, health professionals, and local leaders promoting firearm safety tips, distributing gun locks, and participating in community events, including NC S.A.F.E.'s Week of Action.

X Major Themes

On X, messaging was concise, timely, and advocacy-driven, leveraging the platform's real-time nature to share leadership announcements, event updates, and prevention tips. The overall

tone was direct and action-oriented, with posts using consistent campaign language, and encouraging followers to participate in local NC S.A.F.E. events.

Three major themes emerged across X posts over the duration of the campaign.

1. **Leadership amplification:** Similar to posts on Facebook, posts from Governor Cooper, then–Attorney General Josh Stein, and other state leadership agencies boosted the campaign’s credibility and visibility through concise, shareable announcements.
2. **Community engagement:** Agencies and news organizations used X to promote local events, gun-lock distributions, and timely reminders, leveraging the platform’s immediacy to drive participation.
3. **Child and family safety:** Posts with high engagement framed firearm safety around protecting children and families. This theme emphasized prevention, responsibility, and compassion, helping audiences connect personally with the campaign’s purpose.

Outcome Evaluation Key Findings

What proportion of the campaign audience is aware of the campaign advertising?

Our analysis of self-reported campaign awareness consisted of brand awareness and awareness of individual ads over the past three months measured through forced exposure (i.e., displaying the NC S.A.F.E. logo and ads within the survey). CDC recommends 75 to 85% awareness of campaign ads for a campaign to be effective at influencing attitudes and beliefs (CDC, 2003; Durkin 2012; Schar, 2006; White, 2015), which are precursors to changes in intentions and behavior (though these recommendations are primarily developed from tobacco use prevention). Overall, we found that NC S.A.F.E. is not reaching a large portion of its intended audience with only 58.8% of participants reporting awareness of at least one NC S.A.F.E. ad and 34.0% reporting awareness of the NC S.A.F.E. brand. Awareness was highest among younger participants who were 18 to 24 years old (75%) and among participants who were currently enrolled in (or had completed) a firearm safety course (81.6%). Increased awareness among these groups is likely a result of higher levels of media use among younger participants and heightened levels of awareness to safety-related issues among participants seeking training.

NC S.A.F.E. is pursuing appropriate channels to reach its intended audience. Overall, awareness of the brand and of individual ads increased significantly from wave 1 to wave 2, but additional increases may be needed for the campaign to have its intended effect on behavior.

What are campaign audience reactions to campaign advertising?

Our survey design incorporated forced ad awareness to allow us to measure reactions to the ads independent of organic awareness outside of the study. Each participant, regardless of efficacy study group, was shown each ad and asked about their reactions to the ad. Nearly 90% of participants reported that the ads were clear and more than 85% reported that the ads were believable. Average participant agreement across all perceived effectiveness metrics for each

ad was nearly 80% or greater, indicating that participants overwhelmingly found the ads to be effective.

Additionally, the NC S.A.F.E. brand performed well with study participants. More than three quarters (75.5%) reported that the campaign gives them information they want, is for people like them (75.4%) and would interest them enough to looking into information presented by the campaign (76.8%). The brand performed especially well with helping participants understand how to store their guns safely (81.9% agreement) and reminding them to store their guns safely (86.6%), the latter increasing significantly between wave 1 and wave 2.

Are firearm safety-related beliefs changing over time among the intended audience in North Carolina?

In descriptive analysis, we found that five firearm safety-related beliefs targeted by the campaign increased from wave 1 to wave 2 of the evaluation (Table 22). Additionally, results from our efficacy study indicate that the campaign could have a measurable effect on several more targeted beliefs if it is able to reach more of its intended audience. Agreement with nine total campaign targeted beliefs was significantly greater among participants in the efficacy group compared to the control (Table 20). Further, agreement with 11 total campaign targeted beliefs was significantly greater among participants who were aware of at least one campaign ad compared to those who had not seen any NC S.A.F.E. ads (Table 21).

Ceiling effects may be an additional limitation to the campaign moving targeted beliefs. Agreement with 10 campaign targeted beliefs was at least 85% or more at wave 1 (Table 22). Once agreement reaches this level, it is much more difficult to increase with campaign messaging, requiring more ads and spending per percentage increase in agreement (Wang 2008).

Is campaign exposure associated with perceived safe gun storage practices?

Due to space limitations and the need to include other higher priority items, we did not ask about perceptions of peer safe gun storage. However, we addressed this question indirectly by asking how participants perceived campaign message effectiveness among other gun owners through the following question: “For this question, please sort the following items from most convincing to least convincing **for others in the gun owning community** to store their firearms safely.” Response options included: Messaging about... (1) child safety, (2) mental health, (3) your responsibility to keep your community safe, (4) gun owners’ mental health, (5) family members’ (or people in their household’s) mental health, and (6) other.

Participants perceived that messages about child safety would be most effective among other gun owners. There were no differences among participants who were aware of campaign ads compared to those who were not. In order of effectiveness, participants ranked community safety, mental health, own mental health, family members mental health, and other from most to least effective after child safety.

These findings are supported by agreement with campaign messages, many of which had agreement over 90%, regardless of awareness or efficacy group.

Is campaign exposure associated with changes in intentions to store guns safely?

To understand the changes in intentions to store guns safely and their association with NC S.A.F.E., we developed DiD models to control for changes in the control group over time (Table 28). We found that participants were much more likely to report intentions to store their guns safely to prevent an unintentional injury to a child after campaign exposure (OR=26.1, $p=0.032$). While this is an encouraging finding, the cell size for this outcome was small ($n=30$) and has a wide confidence interval (1.33 – 509.11) and therefore the results may be unstable. Many of the other intentions that changed with campaign exposure we measured moved in the correct direction, including intentions to lock one's gun up in their car or truck, to prevent loss and theft, and to prevent suicide, but were not statistically significant.

Do firearm safety-related knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes correlate with firearm safe storage behaviors?

We measured changes in knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes through descriptive analysis and regression models using safe storage and semi-safe storage as the independent variables. Our analyses found strong positive associations between knowledge of safe gun storage and actual safe storage behavior (OR=7.47, $p<0.001$), and knowledge of semi-safe gun storage and semi-safe storage behavior (OR=6.84, $p<0.001$). Additionally, participants who thought semi-safe storage was correct (i.e., unloaded, locked, but with ammunition) were much more likely to store their guns safely (i.e., unloaded, locked, and separated from ammunition; OR=5.15, $P<0.001$) than those who did not agree with the definition of semi-safe gun storage.

These results indicate that any level of increased knowledge in how to store firearms safely, or semi-safely, can increase actual safe gun storage behavior as defined by unloaded, locked, and separated from ammunition. While thinking that semi-safe gun storage is safe is not ideal, it leads to increases in safe storage overall.

Do firearm safe storage-related knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes differ as a function of exposure to and recall of the campaign?

Campaign awareness affects knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes in the intended direction for many campaign-related messages. In descriptive analysis, agreement with ten campaign-related messages increased significantly among participants who were aware of the campaign compared to those who were not aware (Table 21). Agreement with five campaign-related beliefs increased significantly from wave 1 to wave 2 of the evaluation.

Results from regression analysis (Model 3) that controlled for differences in household and other demographic characteristics show that participants who were aware of at least one campaign ad were significantly more likely to agree with eleven campaign-related messages compared to participants who were not aware of a campaign ad (Table 25). Combined, these results demonstrate a clear campaign effect on agreement with messages delivered in campaign ads.

Is campaign exposure associated with changes in safe gun storage behaviors?

To understand the association between campaign exposure and safe gun storage behavior, we measured safe gun storage behavior at both waves of data collection and analyzed changes using DiD models. Our analysis did not find significant changes in safe gun storage behavior related to campaign exposure. However, there are a few possible explanations for the lack of significant findings. First, limitations in timing for the follow-up wave may not have allowed enough time for participant behavior to change. We launched the second wave of data collection approximately five months after the launch of the first wave due to overall time constraints of the evaluation. While six to eight months between data collection launch is ideal, behavior change can take between 18 and 24 months of program implementation to detect. Additionally, because the campaign launched prior to the evaluation, changes in behavior may have occurred before the first wave of data collection that would not be captured in our data. Finally, small sample sizes may have limited our ability to detect change in this outcome but increasing the sample may be prohibitively expensive.

Conclusions

Taken together, the process evaluation, social media listening, and outcome evaluation key findings indicate that NC S.A.F.E. can be effective at achieving its stated goals of changing safe gun storage behavior, reducing firearm thefts and unauthorized access, and reducing firearm-related injuries. While the process and outcome evaluations indicate that awareness was lower than recommended, the campaign is pursuing the correct channels and strategies to reach its intended audience. For example, social media listening showed large increases in engagement during in-person events and that community partnerships and leadership amplification were important factors for increasing engagement and awareness. Additionally, the outcome evaluation showed higher levels of awareness among younger participants who had higher levels of media use. Given the lower than ideal awareness levels overall, and that the campaign has aired since June 2023, which should be enough time to reach its intended audience, these results indicate that more funding is needed to increase ad buys, in-person events, and partner engagement with consistent messaging over time.

Reactions to the campaign and ads are extremely promising. In the outcome evaluation, 75% or more of participants agreed with each of the eight measures of perceived effectiveness, especially that NC S.A.F.E. ads were informative (87%), believable (87%), and clear (90%). Additionally, more than 75% of respondents agreed with each of the five measures of brand equity, especially that NC S.A.F.E. helped remind them to store their guns safely (87%), a primary goal of the campaign. These results were supported by the process evaluation that, while some results were mixed, found that participants related to ads that depicted people in similar circumstances to their own.

Despite lower than recommended levels of awareness, positive reactions have helped the campaign to be effective at influencing attitudes and beliefs, which are precursors to behavior change. The outcome evaluation showed that campaign-related beliefs moved in the desired direction between the first wave of data collection and the second wave. These results are especially encouraging given that we were not able to collect clean baseline data and the limited time between waves of data collection. Additionally, awareness was associated with increased agreement with campaign related beliefs, and the efficacy results showed significant increases in agreement with campaign related beliefs compared to the control group, a clear campaign effect.

Finally, though the evaluation did not show significant changes in behavior between waves for reasons discussed in the key findings, intentions to store guns safely were significantly higher among participants who were aware of at least one ad compared to those who were not and increased significantly from wave 1 to wave 2 in the efficacy group compared to the control, another clear effect of the campaign.

Recommendations for Future Campaigns

Increase Funding for NC S.A.F.E. Campaign Delivery

While overall awareness was low, it increased from wave 1 to wave 2 of our study and participants who were aware of NC S.A.F.E. ads and messages found them to be informative and effective. Further, the efficacy study results showed significant increases in agreement with campaign-targeted beliefs between participants who saw the ads before reporting their beliefs compared to those who reported their beliefs first. These results indicate that DJJDP is delivering appropriate messages through appropriate channels but are not reaching a large enough portion of their intended audience. Additional funding is needed to increase advertising levels for a sustained period of time (i.e., 2 years for behavioral effects), partner outreach, and in-person events to reach more gun owners in the North Carolina.

Ensure Adequate Ad Testing

In future ad development, ensure adequate pretesting through focus groups and/or individual interviews with representatives from the intended audience to test ads for message clarity, formatting and design, and realistic nature of messages. Consider running an A/B test of ads prior to fielding. A/B testing is an experimental method for comparing two versions of an ad to see which one performs better based on one aspect of the ad that is manipulated (e.g., tagline, colors).

Expand Key Partners to Broaden Campaign Reach

Community violence within North Carolina is a pressing public health and public safety topic, with many communities starting to create local offices focusing on violence prevention. Local community violence prevention efforts are frequently the result of co-partnership between units of local government, local law enforcement agencies, and community-based organizations. To expand on this reach, it is recommended that future gun safety messaging expand to encourage outreach from:

1. **Organizations that represent law enforcement** across the state to include the NC Sheriffs' Association and the NC Chiefs of Police Association. Serving as a guidepost for emerging trends and campaigns relevant to the field, these types of organizations have the potential for greater reach to local law enforcement agencies who routinely share information to the community.
2. **Local community-based organizations** that serve youth and families through violence prevention strategies; many of which are focused on gun-related violence. The issue of gun safety is an underpinning of reducing the number of firearms that fall into the wrong hands or are introduced into the criminal market. As trusted messengers to the community, these organizations can serve as campaign messengers as well as distribute campaign materials and tangible items such as educational materials and gun safety locks to community members they engage with.

3. **Organizations that focus on public health** have the potential to reach individuals interested in learning how to mitigate the risk of injury or death in homes in which a firearm is present. These organizations include public health departments, Safe Kids and Safe Communities Coalitions, Gun Safety/Firearm Injury Prevention teams, and youth serving organizations.

Additionally, it is recommended to consider local context when expanding the core group of amplification partners early identified through social media listening. A coordinated approach within individual counties for campaign dissemination should be explored. Designating a key stakeholder already engaged in injury prevention, who understands local context to inform ad placement and other outreach strategies, to serve as the lead organization, could magnify campaign reach. This could include organizations and coalitions such as Safe Kids, Safe Communities, Child Fatality Prevention Team, and Gun Safety/Firearm Injury Prevention, who convene diverse local stakeholders dedicated to injury prevention.

Strengthen Social Media Amplification Through Law Enforcement and Public Safety Organizations

We recommend future campaigns build on the existing social media templates provided to partner agencies by increasing their distribution and reworking them to encourage more engaging, audience-centered content that brings the potential to change beliefs and attitudes associated with firearm access and safety. Enhancing templates with more interactive or narrative-driven elements may not only improve partner participation, but also increase the likelihood that members of the North Carolina public are encouraged to share, comment on, or discuss the campaign organically

As found in the results (Tables 10 - 14 of Social Media Listening section), the category of law enforcement and public safety organizations played a significant role in mentions and impressions. Most major departments have the ability to actively post, expanding the reach and frequency of campaign messaging, as well as serving as an example for other departments to share or repost. Additionally, many benefit from having a public information officer or similar position dedicated to engaging with the community to increase transparency, gather crime solving information, and share safety messaging. Partnering with the top posting agencies to co-design the messaging templates, packaged as a toolkit, may generate a more organic localized plan. Local agencies have knowledge of best practices useful in engaging with their online community as well as local context into attitudes about firearm safety and storage that can inform the messaging. These agencies are also familiar with their unique community issues that may drive positive changes in firearm storage and safety, whether its messages that appeal to mental health concerns, youth access to firearms, unsafe storage practices, or community violence, as examples.

Expand Ad Placement through Community Reach

While social media and digital content can provide an expansive reach, more traditional methods can be helpful for reaching individuals who do not ‘follow’ the accounts of government organizations, to include law enforcement, or who do not engage with social media in general. Expand on existing ad placement by increasing the placement of non-digital content, including bus wraps and billboards, in both rural and urban locations that experience high rates of gun-related crime. Additionally, local businesses and buildings provide an opportunity to reach these populations who may be interested in purchasing a firearm and/or taking firearm safety classes, and/or applying for a concealed weapon permit. Areas for consideration for a written material campaign (i.e., posters) could include:

- Pawn Shops
- Judicial and public safety locations to include courthouse, magistrate, bail bond, and law enforcement agency public areas (e.g., lobby, waiting areas, elevators)
- Gun stores (especially local businesses that may have more flexibility in posting than chain businesses)
- Firearm ranges
- Businesses and areas individuals who hunt may frequent (primarily in rural areas)
- Library community boards
- Community-based organizations lobby and congregation areas
- Pediatrician and urgent care waiting rooms

Any future campaign materials should align with the current practice of including QR codes and/or URLs to NC S.A.F.E. website on printed materials to allow viewers to easily learn more about safe storage and/or access resources.

Inform campaign messaging with evaluation findings related to data on firearm incidents, safety definitions, and motivations for ownership and storage behavior

- Portray situations commonplace in firearm theft cases using law enforcement stolen firearm data.
- Most firearms (51% in 2022) are stolen from unlocked cars (Szkola et al., 2024)
 - Gun owners will store firearms in car consoles, under seats, and in glove compartments-this misperception of the item being hidden does not make it a safe spot, especially in an unlocked vehicle.
 - Most firearm thefts from vehicles occur at night
- With the understanding that DPS prioritized influencing the general audience to at least lock up their firearms, continue to emphasize the importance of firearms being “locked.” Further emphasize the importance of firearms being stored “unloaded”; clarify what

“unloaded” means. Consider emphasizing storing ammunition in a separate, locked location as a safe storage behavior, for audience segments who seem open to it, or for individuals who have questions about best practices. Describe or illustrate realistic scenarios for how to properly store ammunition.

- While more challenging to change beliefs, emphasize the reality of data that shows theft or injury/death from unsecured firearms present a higher risk than an intruder incident in which a gun owner would arm themselves.
- Create ads that invoke messaging based on motivators for gun ownership (e.g., protection of family, keeping families safe) and safe storage (e.g., preventing accidents, preventing children from accessing firearms, preventing theft) shared by gun owners in NC.
- Address perceived barriers to safe storage that gun owners face, including wanting easy access in case of emergencies. Consider creating or sharing resources for how to find and purchase appropriate safe(s) for firearm storage.
- Use personal testimonials from relatable gun owners in NC that portray safe storage behaviors and their motivations for their storage practices.

Incorporate Evaluation at the Planning Phase

While this evaluation offers valuable insight into campaign impact, future efforts could be strengthened by collecting baseline data prior to campaign launch. Information collected from the intended audience prior to campaign exposure can provide a clean picture of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors and allow for adjustments to campaign messaging and delivery, before ads are aired, to improve efficacy of the campaign.

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Appendix 1: NC S.A.F.E. Telephone Screener

Appendix 2: NC S.A.F.E.: Online Recruitment Posting and Pre-Screener

Appendix 3: NC S.A.F.E.: Confirmation Email and Reminder Email

Appendix 4: NC S.A.F.E.: Informed Consent Form: Interview

Appendix 5: NC S.A.F.E. Interview Guide Round 1

Appendix 6: NC S.A.F.E. Interview Guide Round 2

Appendix 7: NC S.A.F.E. Consent to Participate in a Survey (Wave 1)

Appendix 8: NC S.A.F.E. Outcome Evaluation Adult Survey/Screenener (Wave 1)

Appendix 9: NC S.A.F.E. Survey Video Ad Examples (Wave 1)

Appendix 10: NC S.A.F.E. Static Ad Collage (Wave 1)

**Appendix 11: NC S.A.F.E. Outcome Evaluation Adult
Survey/Screenener (Wave 2)**

**Appendix 12: NC S.A.F.E. Outcome Evaluation
Adult Survey/Screenener (Supplemental
Wave 2)**

Appendix 13: NC S.A.F.E. Survey Video Ad Examples (Wave 2)

Appendix 14: NC S.A.F.E. Static Ad Collage (Wave 2)